

Flowers of every hue are blossoming all over Beijing, confirming that spring indeed has sprung. **Page 16**



There are many rags-to-riches stories from the period of "jadeite gambling." **Page 10**



"You could spend a million and get nothing, or win a million with just five yuan." **Page 9**

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English SARS Hotline Opens

By Xiao Rong

Two 24-hour English language hotlines for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) related questions were opened in Beijing yesterday by the Beijing Disease Prevention and Control Center.

China is adopting measures to secure the health of foreigners here, said Vice Premier Wu Yi Wednesday at a meeting with the World Health Organization (WHO) expert team, which has just finished an inspection trip to Guangdong Province and Beijing.

A group of 12 specialists in Beijing will provide technological support in the fields of SARS prevention and treatment.

Personnel from foreign embassies, consulates, large corporations and the media, as well as foreign students in Beijing will be invited to briefings providing up-to-date information on SARS in China and materials on the prevention of the disease, Wu said.

An information card will be given to foreigners entering China, notifying them where they can find relevant prevention knowledge and providing hospital phone numbers.

Foreigners in Beijing who have symptoms can go to any hospital for treatment, with Youan, Ditan and Beijing Thorax hospitals being the three designated hospitals for SARS diagnosis, an official from Beijing Disease Prevention and Control Center told *Beijing Today*.

Sanitation work aimed at minimizing SARS risks began at Beijing Railway Station yesterday. Other public places, such as the airport, supermarkets, bus terminuses and taxis are also required to strengthen disinfecting measures.

The number of reported SARS cases totaled 1,290 on the Chinese mainland as of April 9, with 1,213 in Guangdong and 22 in Beijing. The death toll from the disease stands at 55, according to a press release issued yesterday by the Ministry of Public Health.

Of the 1,290 SARS patients, 1,025 or 79.4 percent, have recovered and been discharged from hospital.

Pekka Aro, an official with the International Labor Organization, died of SARS in Beijing early last Sunday morning. The 53-year-old Finnish national is the first foreigner to have died from SARS on the Chinese mainland.

Hotline numbers for English language SARS information are 6421 2486 and 6421 7830.



Both English and Chinese language services are offered on the four SARS hotlines.



An American soldier on guard in the downtown area of Baghdad.

Xinhua Photos

US Troops Expand Control of Baghdad

Baghdad was in chaos on day 21 of the Iraq war, with looters ransacking government buildings and shops. US troops advanced steadily on Wednesday in the capital following the calmest night since the war began.

Only sporadic shelling and gunfire rang out after daybreak as more US troops moved in to expand their control of the capital city of five million people.

American tanks and armored per-

sonnel carriers moved block by block through the urban sprawl of neighborhoods, squeezing out pockets of Iraqi resistance on their way.

A key Iraqi opposition leader, Ahmad Chalabi, said Wednesday that he had information that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein survived an earlier air strike in Baghdad and escaped from the capital with at least one of his sons.

Nothing has been heard from the Iraqi leader since a US bomber on

Monday struck the al-Mansur residential neighborhood in Baghdad, believed to be frequented by the Iraqi leader and his two sons.

However, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told a Pentagon press briefing that he did not know whether Saddam was dead or alive.

Meanwhile Iraq's official radio and television fell silent Tuesday, and on Wednesday, Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations Mohammed Al-Douri announced, "the game is over."

Brigadier General Vincent Brooks said Wednesday at Central Command's war base in Qatar that it was not yet time to declare a ceasefire in Iraq.

More than 1,250 Iraqis have been killed and more than 5,100 wounded in the war, according to Iraqi estimates.

On the side of the US-led coalition forces, 131 have been killed and 18 are missing or have been captured. (Xinhua)

It's a Dog's Life

But it may be getting cheaper

By Xiao Rong

Anyone who saw the recently screening *Cala! My Dog* will empathize with those less well-off Beijingers who have to struggle to raise the 5,000 yuan registration fee for their pet pooches.

However good news may be on the way for dog owners, with the government soliciting opinions on a revised dog ownership law, that among other changes, slashes dog registration fees.

The draft "Regulation for Raising Dogs in Beijing" was released last Tuesday on the municipal government's website, with feedback being invited from citizens.

"The original regulation was based on strict constraint over dog ownership. One of the key changes of the new draft is its emphasis on the treatment and handling of dogs by their owners," said Zhang Guoqiang, from the legal office of the municipal government.

The original regulation, which took effect in 1995, aimed at strictly controlling the number of pet dogs by charging a registration fee of 5,000 yuan for the first year and a subsequent 2,000 yuan annually.

The new draft, however, suggests a much lower registration fee of 2,000 yuan for the first year and 1,000 yuan for subsequent years. Elderly dog owners are entitled to a fifty percent reduction, while the fees are waived entirely for the handicapped.

More human

Up till yesterday, a total of 115 comments had been left on the official website of the municipal legal office. Many more citizens called the hotline to offer their views.

"One common comment on the draft is that it's more human than the current law, especially with the decrease of the registration fee," Zhang Guoqiang said. "Opinions also focus on the draft's emphasis on regulations concerning the way dog owners treat their pets."

Wang Ye posted a comment, which read, "Raising a dog is a right that should be respected and protected."

In Wang's opinion, the original regulation reads like "those that focus more on levying money than really serving citizens."

Comments left by Zeng Wenyu went against the general trend of opinions. Zeng wrote that there should always be a

restriction on the number of pet dogs.

"China is a country with a huge population, there is barely enough space for human beings in big cities like Beijing, it's really unfair for more and more dogs to occupy the space of persons."

Dogged debate

The revision of the dog law is based on investigations carried out citywide since 2001, according to Zhang Guoqiang. As many as 18 symposiums have been organized by the legal office, with over 400 citizens conveying their opinions.

As the major enforcement body for dog-related issues, the public security bureau also contributed opinions on the draft.

"Dog owners were mostly wealthy people in the past, but now more and more unemployed and elderly people have pet dogs. The high cost of dog registration has led to an increasing number of unlicensed dogs, as most people cannot afford the fee," said Zhang Jianxing, a police officer from the canine department of the Public Security Branch of Chaoyang district.

With looser controls over dog ownership, the draft can help ease relationships between police and residents, said a Mr. Li from the press office of the Beijing Public Security Bureau, who declined to reveal his full name.

One of the major tasks of the

canine departments of police stations is to catch unlicensed dogs, which creates tension between the police and citizens, Li complained.

"But we also stressed the importance of educating dog owners to the necessity of offering a good environment for their dogs," said Zhang Jianxing.

"Most complaints we receive concern disturbances dogs have caused for non dog owners, like noise, soiling the environment and biting people," he added.

Dog's best friend

"Actually it's not the fault of the dogs who disturb other people's lives, it's mainly the problems of their owners," said Zhang Li, chief representative of the International Fund for Animal Welfare Beijing Office.

Zhang welcomed the change to the dog law, saying the strengthening of regulations concerning the behavior of dog owners when walking their dogs is a great improvement.

Since Beijing's first dog ownership regulation was issued in 1995, over 120,000 dogs have been licensed citywide.

Official statistics are unavailable as to the exact number of unlicensed dogs in Beijing. But catching these vagrants is a task that consumes a considerable number of police hours.

Besides reducing the registration fee, the new draft regulation focuses mainly on the

He also called for measures to be taken to encourage dog owners who treat their pets in a responsible manner, while punishing those who abuse or abandon their dogs.

"Those who raise the same dog for many years should be entitled to a waiver or decrease in the registration fee," said Zhang. "And sterilization should also be encouraged."

Transparency in the way registration fees are used can also help improve the government's image and encourage more dog owners to pay the fees, says Zhang.

In fact, the legal office has raised the possibility of introducing a special regulation to this end.

"After soliciting public opinions, we will submit the draft to the Municipal People's Congress for further discussion, and a public hearing might be held to invite more suggestions," said Zhang Guoqiang.

behavior of dog owners.

Dogs are not allowed in public parks and must be put in cages when carried in elevators or taxis, according to the draft. When being walked, dogs must be attached to a leash, held at the other end by an adult equipped with implements for the cleaning up of doggie do.

EDITOR: LIU FENG
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Centralized Power to Guard State-owned Assets

By Ena Ma

To no real fanfare, a new sign for the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Committee replaced the original signs at the gate of the former State Economic and Trade Commission (SETC) and the Central Working Committee for Enterprises (CWCE) last Sunday.

The switch was symbolic of the changes that have come from the reshuffling of the State Council as approved by the National People's Congress (NPC) held in March. The committee is one of the new government institutions, along with the Ministry of Commerce and the Banking Regulatory Commission, that has debated since the closing to the congress.

The new committee will watch over 10 trillion yuan of state-owned assets and wield combined powers over state-

owned enterprises' operations, personnel and property previously scattered among the SETC, CWCE, Ministry of Finance and other six bureaucratic bodies.

However, the formation of the committee has not been a simple matter of power centralization. The body's position as an "owner", rather than "chief executive", of state-owned enterprises has been a source of debate and controversy. Finding the right degree of control so things go smoothly but daily operations are not interrupted is widely considered the new committee's greatest challenge.

"The role change from administrator to shareholder, as the government representative, means the committee is entitled and limited to rights in keeping with its proportion of shares in a given company as stipulated in the Cor-

poration Law," said Zhou Fangsheng, an official from the Ministry of Finance and expert on state-owned assets management, in a news conference during the NPC meeting.

According to Wei Jie, an economist and one of the drafters of the state-owned asset reform plan, 80 percent of state-owned listed companies account for over half of the total capital in China's stock market. "This kind of singular capital structure is not beneficial to full market competition. State-owned assets should be invested more in public products like social security and toll-free roads, not enterprises," he said.

Wei added that state-owned assets should be gradually withdrawn from such industries as telecommunications, while leaving the matter of telecom security to the supervision of the Min-

istry of Information Industry.

"The establishment of this committee is just the first step in the right direction," Chen Qingtai, deputy director of the Development Research Center of the State Council, told a reporter from *Caijing*, a domestic financial magazine, during the NPC. "Detailed legislation must be worked out as soon as possible to allow the committee to fulfill its duties," he added.

Last Friday also saw the State Council's appointment of Li Rongrong, former director of the SETC, as head of the new committee.

Li was born in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, in 1944. After graduating from Tianjin University with a major in chemistry, Li began his career as a worker. He entered government service in 1986 and was named SETC director in 2001.

City to Lessen Burdens of Foreign Investors

The Beijing municipal government will scrap 175 categories of administrative charges for foreign-funded companies, said Vice-Mayor Zhang Mao on Wednesday.

According to Zhang, the new local government will work hard to create a better environment for investment over the next five years, and work in 2003 will focus on reducing costs for foreign-funded companies.

He noted that the government will crack down on illegal activities like arbitrary charges, quotas and fines.

Meanwhile, the local government will also adjust land supply management to lower the cost of land use. Land prices in Beijing, especially for land for commercial use, are well above the national average.

To further optimize the investment environment, Beijing will start open bidding for commercial land trading, said Xie Jingrong, an official from Beijing Municipal Department of Housing and Land Management.

Xie said land for first-hand development will be made open to public bidding and developers can acquire rights for land use through transfers, leasing, assignment and shareholding. (Xinhua)

Worldwide Search Is On for Olympic Songs

By Yu Lei

The theme song for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games will be chosen from among the "Olympic songs" the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) collects during a five-year international project.

The plan was announcement by Sun Weijia, deputy director of BOCOG's Media and Communications Department at a press conference held by the committee.

The campaign will kick off on April 15 and run until 2007. Each year, 10 select songs will be dubbed "Olympic songs". By 2008, the theme song for the Beijing Olympics will be chosen from those 50 finalists. It is hoped that the theme song will not only reflect Chinese culture and the Olympic spirit, but also become popular around the world.

The campaign is being organized by BOCOG, the Chinese Musicians' Association under the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Radio Beijing, the capital's leading broadcaster. Beijing Music Radio under Radio Beijing has been entrusted with handling daily operation of the project.

According to BOCOG, the deadline for song submission for this year is August 31, and the selection process will begin in September. Detailed information about the campaign is available at www.beijing-olympic.org.cn or www.fm974.com.cn.



Fiddler on the Dam

Wednesday night, the temporary lock of the Three Gorges Dam opened its doors to its last passengers. Lai Yongsheng, the 53-year-old master of the lock, played "Auld Lang Syne" on his violin to wish the ships passing through the lock bon voyage. The lock had been used for five years since the damming of the Yangtze river, but is now ready to make way for the completed permanent lock. Navigation of the river will be suspended for 67 days as the final touches are put on the permanent lock.

Photo by photocom

Regular Joes to Weigh In on Air Ticket Prices

By Hou Mingxin

On Thursday, the China Consumers' Association (CAA) named the seven common consumers that will participate in a public hearing on domestic airline ticket prices held by the State Development and Reform Commission in the middle or end of this month, according to a report run in the *Beijing Evening News* that day.

The report said that the seven representatives were drawn in a lottery from 47 candidates under the supervision of Beijing's Chang'an Public Notary.

The CCA led a search for those candidates from April 1 to 7.

According to a spokesman for the CCA who requested anonymity, after consulting with the China Price Association, the CCA decided that the seven consumers would be selected from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, Sichuan, Hubei, Heilongjiang and Shanxi Provinces. They represent different consumption levels and work at a wide range of employment, including the government, private businesses and state-owned enterprises.

The Beijing representative is Ren

Suiying, director of the Capital Airport Branch of the Beijing Administration for Industry and Commerce.



An official from the CCA announces the name of the seven chosen consumers.

Photo by Liu Ping

Toll on Capital Airport Highway Decreases

By Hou Mingxin

Starting last Friday, the Weigou Tollbooth on the Capital Airport highway has lowered its tolls, the Capital Highway Development Co. announced last Thursday.

The tolls dropped to 5, 10, and 15 yuan from the previous 10, 20, and 30 yuan, differing according to vehicle type. Vehicles with less than eight seats or trucks with capacity of less than one ton must pay 5 yuan; vehicles with eight to 19 seats or trucks that can carry up to 7 tons must pay 10 yuan; and vehicles with more than 19 seats or trucks with carrying capacity of over 7 tons must pay 15 yuan.

This is the second time for a tollbooth on the Capital Airport highway to cut its charges since last September. According to a report published in *Beijing Youth Daily* last Saturday, the reductions are intended to support the economic development of the city's suburbs and decrease congestion on the highway.

City Ties Tethers Floating Ads

By Hou Mingxin

In line with the Civil Aviation Administering Ordinance issued by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) that will take effect as of May 1, the Beijing Municipal Government will strengthen its management of large advertising balloons.

Anyone or companies found floating such balloons without proper approval will face penalties of up to 50,000 yuan in fines and possible imprisonment, the *Beijing Morning News* reported on Monday.

According to the ordinance, organizations or individuals that intend to float un-piloted balloons must receive approval from the local aviation administration at least two days in advance.

Such balloons must not reach altitudes of over 150 meters, and

those that will float at over 50 meters in the air should have very clear markings and equipment for rapid deflation.

No balloons are allowed to be flown near the airport, and if control is lost of any balloon, the local aviation administration is to be notified at once.

An unnamed spokesman for the CAAC said that in recent years, increasing numbers of advertising balloons have been cluttering the capital's skies, some posing safety risks to planes flying in and out of the city.

Out-of-control balloons can become "sky bombs" for airplanes, the spokesman continued, because they can reach altitudes of 1,200 meters and cannot be detected by radar. Especially at night, there is danger that such balloons could be sucked into and damage airplane engines.

Approval of Telecom Providers Made More Transparent

By Ena Ma

The draft version of the Process Regulation for Applying for Telecommunication Business Permission was made public on the official website of the Ministry of Information Industry (MII) early last week.

According to the draft regulation, all applications filed by companies that wish to offer telecommunications services will be dealt with during the first 20 days of April and September. In the past, the ministry handled such applications on a daily basis.

"Daily approval is not in keeping with the new expert evaluation system, which requires selected part-time experts to meet to evaluate the business applications," said Dr. Chen Jinqiao, director of the Institute of Policy Research of the China Academy of Telecommunications Research under the Ministry of Information Industry.

According to Chen, aside from the six nationwide monopoly telecom operators who provide basic telecommunications services such as fixed-line, GSM, trunk communication and satellite communication, the draft regulation is mainly aimed at the over 4,000 operators in this country that provide value-added telecommunications services, such as Internet content providers, Internet data centers and electronic data interchange providers.

"Because value-added service operations do not require huge investment to start, the market has been flooded by inexperienced gold diggers. To deal with this market disorder, the names of all new businesses that apply for approval will be published 15 days before they get the go ahead, in order to give the public time to voice their opinions," the director continued.

Dalian Securities Shut Down

By Hou Mingxin

The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) has decided to close Dalian Securities Co. and cancel its operating certificate, as it committed serious violations of the National Securities Law and its assets could not offset its debts.

A Xinhua report last Saturday stated this is the first time that the CSRC has closed a company under the aegis of the Securities Law.

According to that report, Dalian Securities was established in 1988 and developed quickly in its first few years. Later, however, disorderly and improper management led to illegal actions and the amassing of heavy debt.

An unnamed CSRC official said that the Dalian Securities case shows that only securities companies that operate in the bounds of the law can develop in a market economy.

Construction Bank Fined over Hidden Coiffers

By Ena Ma

According to an article in Monday's *Economic Observer*, investigations conducted by China's National Audit Office (NPO) last year of 20 branches of China Construction Bank's nationwide uncovered 88 secret banking accounts sheltering over 1 billion yuan. Last week, the NPO slapped the bank with a penalty of 19 million yuan and demanded the payment of relevant business taxes and enterprise income taxes.

Such secret accounts are used by companies or bank branches to evade required payment of taxes and profits.

The discovery of the illegal accounts and subsequent punishment are bad news for Construction Bank, which has the lowest bad debt rate of the country's four massive state banks and is moving towards listing on the domestic stock market.

The *Economic Observer* article also quoted an unnamed official of the NPO as saying, "Our work for this year will focus on the Industrial and Commercial Bank and life insurance companies."

Sprechen Zie Deutch?

By Hou Mingxin

Last Saturday, 280 people in five cities around China sat for the TestDaF, a test of German language skills. It was the first time for the test to be held in this country.

Similar in form to the US's TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), the purpose of the TestDaF is to evaluate German proficiency among non-native speakers of the language.

According to an agreement signed last October by the National Education Examinations Authority of China (NEEA) and the German Federation of Academic Testing (GFAT), the administrator of the TestDaF, the test was introduced to China in the five cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, and Wuhan.

German universities are proving increasingly popular among Chinese hoping to study abroad. According to a report published in *Beijing Youth Daily* on Sunday, about 20,000 Chinese are currently studying in Germany.

With its launch completed, the TestDaF will now be offered twice a year, once in April and once in November. People can sign up to take the test as many times as they like, and test scores remain valid for two years after their date of issue.

The fee for taking the test is 1,100 yuan (about 110 euros).

Prospective applicants can get detailed information and download sample test questions from the test's official website (www.testdaf.de) or the website of the NEEA (www.51test.com).

By Ema Ma

With the distribution of a special bonus in addition to 2002's dividend to celebrate its 100th anniversary, Tsingtao Brewery, the largest brewer in China, and US-based Anheuser-Busch (A-B), the world's largest brewer, announced the transfer of the first of three convertible bonds, in Qingdao, Shandong Province, last week.

The agreement calls for Tsingtao to issue three convertible bonds valued at approximately US \$182 million to A-B. As the debt converts to equity over seven years, A-B's economic interest in Tsingtao will increase from the current 4.5 percent to 27 percent, all held in the form of H shares listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. The agreement was signed last October.

A-B paid \$116.4 million for the first two bonds. It will pay an additional \$65.2 million within 12 months. The first bond will be converted to H shares in 90 days, increasing A-B's equity interest to 9.9 percent.

The alliance builds on a nine-year co-operation between the two brewers. In 1993, A-B purchased 45 million H shares in Tsingtao on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange for a five percent share, which was later diluted to a 4.5 percent share with the issuance of A shares on the Shanghai exchange.

The biggest beer market

China is believed to have now the largest beer market in the world, and it has been growing annually at five percent or greater. Tsingtao holds a 12.8 percent share of the market. Its flagship brand, Tsingtao, the number-one beer brand in China, is sold in more than 40 countries and regions, and the export volume accounts for more than 50 percent of China's beer exports.

A-B's Budweiser brand is the world's top-selling beer, locally brewed in 10 countries and sold in more



Tsingtao - Bud Alliance ? True !

than 80 others worldwide. A-B holds an 11 percent share of the global beer market and last year accounted for almost half of the US market.

Money and experience

The \$182 million is undoubtedly a life saver for cash-strapped Tsingtao. After an acquisition spree in China's fragmented beer market starting 1997, virtually all the capital raised from the issuing of H and A shares in 1993 was used up by early 1998. A further issuance of 100 million yuan on the A share market in 2001 is also almost gone. Meanwhile a 56 percent liability rate has exerted a stranglehold on

Tsingtao's further development.

According to the agreement, the capital contributed by A-B will be used to improve Tsingtao's brewing assets, construct new brewing facilities and make future acquisitions.

Another hangover of the takeover binge is that within 48 acquired subsidiaries, one third are in profit, another third are breaking even and the remaining third are in red. "They really need time to consolidate ... around the country," said Hong Kong-based Sun Hung Kai Research analyst Maggie Choi. That is perhaps another important motive for Tsingtao to ally with A-B, which is experienced in consolidation after large-scale amortization.

With this transaction, A-B will be the largest private shareholder and will have representation on the Tsingtao board, supervisory board and key board committees. **Another national brand devoured by foreign business?**

The Qingdao State-Owned Assets Bureau will remain the largest shareholder, holding a 30.6 percent share after all bonds are converted. According to the agreement, A-B will exercise 20 percent of its voting right. The remaining seven percent will be entrusted to Qingdao State-Owned Assets Bureau to vote.

A-B also owns 98 percent of the Budweiser Wuhan International Brewing in Wuhan, Hubei Province, where its Budweiser and Bud Ice brands are brewed. Budweiser is the leading premium international beer sold in China.

"The beer giants had previously agreed to promote Tsingtao beer rather than focus on Budweiser, due to the lower advertising investment and shorter cycle of investment returns," said Tsingtao chairman Li Guirong. "The alliance will be separate from A-B's Chinese Budweiser business, and there are no plans to merge the two companies." **Photos by Photocom**



Audi, the top-of-the-range carmaker subsidiary of Volkswagen, Tuesday launched the Chinese-built A4 onto the market in Shanghai. The new model is expected to push total car sales for the company to 50,000 units this year. The A4 will target Audi's only two rivals in China: BMW and Mercedes Benz. Priced between 379,000 to 559,000 yuan, the car will be available for sale in Beijing by the end of this month.

Xinhua Photo

Search Sites Scramble to Block Google

By Shan Jinliang

The semi-official China Search Alliance, which unites around 200 leading news websites and information ports, is seeking support from top portal websites to counter the dominance of Google, the world's most popular search engine.

Initiated by SinoBnet and China.com, the alliance opened its search ranking service, charging companies in terms of search time, toward the end of March. On April 1, Google started negotiations on cooperation with local agencies.

According to Netease, a leading portal website that uses Google as its search tool, Google held talks with several Internet service providers (ISPs). Google global PR manager Debbie Frost said the company does not have any partners in China and declined to give any development plan for China.

"Since Microsoft announced the acquisition Google last month," said an industry expert who requested anonymity, "it wants to boost its value by entering China and enlarging the market, and the entry of Google will introduce more forces to the MSN service of Microsoft China."

Facing the challenge from Google, alliance official and SinoBnet vice president Chen Pei said that with its low price and high efficiency, Google is not what they fear most.

"Google is yet to become familiar with the domestic market," said Chen, "and as the largest e-government company, SinoBnet has advantages in terms of distribution

channels and the market. What's more, our service price is considerably lower than that of the international quotes of Google."

However, the alliance has other competitors, such as Baidu and 3721. Baidu has been concentrating on the field of corporate ranking for a few years, and at the same time, China's leading four portal websites, Sina, Sohu, Netease and Tom, have their own corporate ranking service. The four portals are more popular than the partners of the alliance, which explains why the alliance hopes to attract Sina, as a means of strengthening its influence.

Sina's PR company, PFT Consulting, told Beijing Today that Sina will sign an agreement with the alliance on April 15, declining to give further details, but some media analysts have expressed doubt as to whether Sina truly intends to work with the alliance.

Chen Pei expressed the hope that competition with other Chinese companies could be avoided, referring to the dispute between Sina and Baidu, the leading search engine charging companies in terms of hits. Now the alliance has a similar role to Baidu, but Chen insisted the two would complement each other in search raking service patterns.

Chen said the alliance aims to seize a 20 percent share of the search market this year, and 50 percent in two years. "Only by expanding the market quickly (with more partners) can the alliance prevent the dominance of Google," Chen added.

Big Two Push One Way Call Fees in Guangdong

By Shan Jinliang

In the lead up to China Telecom's launch of its PHS (Personal Handy-access Service) mobile phone service in Guangdong Province, China's two biggest wireless telecom operators have both started offering one-way fee services.

The move marks the first time for China Mobile to offer a one-way charge service in China. It is also the first time for China

ers in Guangdong would be able to receive calls free of charge providing their outgoing call charges totaled at least 10 yuan per month. On Monday, China Unicom announced a similar deal for its GSM users.

Commenting on widespread fears of the revenue fall from the one-way fee charges, State Council Development and Research Center analyst Zhang Huaiyong said overall income might actually increase, because the number of calls could increase by 30 to 40 percent.

On Tuesday, the first day of the promotion by China Mobile and Unicom, many people came to look, but few actually made a purchase.

The promotion by China Mobile and Unicom has not been the subject of any vetoes by the government, which according to a *Guangzhou Daily* report could signal a shift in attitude by the government to allow the provision of PHS services in big cities as a trade-off for one-way fee charges.

Leading telecom consultancy BDA China analyst Wang Meng said it could also be an attempt to test how low China Mobile and Unicom could sustain mobile charges, in a lead-up to the gradual implementation of one-way fee charges on all mobile phones.

On Tuesday, the first day of the promotion by China Mobile and Unicom, many people came to look, but few actually made a purchase.

Unicom to charge one-way fees to its GSM (global system for mobile communication) phone users.

PHS is a wireless phone technology that charges the caller the same rates as standard fixed line phones. Thanks to the relatively low charges, PHS had attracted over 13 million users throughout China by the end of last year.

The counter move by China Mobile and Unicom is seen by analysts as an attempt to stabilize the Guangdong market, which accounts for one sixth of the national total of mobile phone users, before the PHS service goes into operation province-wide in mid-April.

China Mobile announced last Friday that its high-end consum-

Headquarter Base Caters to High-tech Enterprises

By Shan Jinliang

Fengtai Science Park, a branch of Zhongguancun Science Park, has unveiled a plan to lure foreign hi-tech companies by building a base for multinational headquarter offices.

With a land area of 65 hectares, the project will be invested with three billion yuan by the British Dauphin International Group and Fengtai Science Park. With work due to start next month, the park is expected to host the head officers of large and small but fast growing multinationals.

Currently, the new central business district (centered around Dabeyiao), Haidian Science Park (Zhongguancun) and the Beijing Development Area (in Daxing District) are the main areas of Beijing hosting international companies.

Regarding competition with these three areas to attract foreign companies, Lou Huafeng, public relations manager of Fengtai Science Park commented, "The three have different focuses: the CBD aims at attracting commercial companies, Haidian Science Park hi-tech companies and the Beijing Development Area is a production bases for international companies."

Nokia Consolidates to Overtake Motorola

By Shan Jinliang

Nokia, China's leading foreign investor, announced the consolidation of its four joint ventures in China on March 31, and said it also planned to make CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) handsets in China, both of which are seen as moves to overtake its big brother Motorola.

The new holding company of Nokia will be based in Beijing. An industry analyst told the *Economic Observer* Monday that after the consolidation, no Chinese shareholders could control the new joint venture since Nokia will own 60 percent of the stock.

Nokia is the world's largest handset maker, and China is the second biggest market for Nokia behind the US. However, latest statistics show Nokia sold 11.35 million handsets compared to Motorola's 18.72 million in 2002. The license to make CDMA handsets was seen as a big disadvantage for Nokia in its struggle with Motorola, the only foreign handset make able to make CDMA handsets.

Earlier this year, Nokia raised announced its plan to seize a 25 percent market share for CDMA handsets, following the announcement by the only CDMA operator, China Unicom, that it would have 13 million CDMA users this year. Nokia is confident of cornering the market with its price on the handset chips, because it is also a developer of the chips.

Hitachi Makes Adjustment in China

By Chen Ying

Hitachi announced last week it would implement management organization and system reform in its China operations to promote the company's globalization and strengthen its business here.

Until the announcement, Beijing-based Hitachi (China) was the national headquarters of Hitachi. The company was charge of investment in China, project development and support activity, mainly in promoting the generator and electrical machinery business. Meanwhile, Hitachi Asia (Hong Kong), a subsidiary of Singapore-based Hitachi Asia, was engaged in selling semiconductors, communications equipment and air conditioning.

Hitachi (China), renamed Hitachi (China) Investment, will now focus on investment in China and take the role of the area headquarters, while Hitachi Asia (Hong Kong), now Hitachi China, will sell generators, electrical machinery, communications equipment, consumer electronics and electronic devices, as well as take charge of after-sales service and purchasing materials in the Greater China Zone.

Hitachi has also appointed a new president of Hitachi (China) Investment, Kazuhiko Tsuruta, who replaces former president Masao Hisada.

IKEA to Cut Prices for Expansion

By Ema Ma

"IKEA will cut its prices to share more slices in China's furniture market," Anders Dahlvig, president and CEO of IKEA Group announced at the re-opening its Shanghai shop Wednesday.

The world's biggest home furnishings retailer, IKEA came to China in 1998, targeting the country's burgeoning middle-class. However to date, the company has only opened two shops, in Beijing and Shanghai. In 2002, IKEA's China sales accounted for less than one percent of its global 11 billion euro sales.

"We are preparing for further price cuts, to make IKEA inexpensive enough for more people to afford. But this still needs time, as we need to find more appropriate purchase prices to make room for the price cuts," Dahlvig said. He also disclosed that IKEA will accelerate its expansion in China, opening two shops a year during the next six years.

Cao Yingchao, secretary-general of the China National Furniture Association said in the ceremony, "Domestic companies must invest more efforts on furniture designing to compete with foreign peers."



Zhu Yanfeng (left), president of China First Automobile Works (FAW), shakes hands Wednesday in Tokyo with Fujio Cho, president of Toyota Motors, to celebrate an agreement to jointly produce four Toyota-brand vehicle models in China.

Greenspan: War Impact Not Clear

Simi Valley, California, April 9 (Reuters) - Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said on Wednesday the Iraq war's full impact on the US economy would not become clear until the conflict is over.

"We will not know what the full impact of this war will be until it's over," Greenspan said in answer to audience questions after a speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, adding that the US economy is "more prone to economic growth than stagnation."

He said the risk was small that the United States could suffer a deflationary spiral like the one that has plagued Japan, but that monetary policymakers were equipped to cope if one did emerge.

Fed officials have repeated this reassurance recently, with interest rates standing at a four-decade low of 1.25 percent after 12 cuts since 2001 and signs of continued weakness in the economy.

They have cited a number of alternatives to interest-rate cuts that they could use to tackle debilitating weakness if it arose, including lowering long-term rates by buying US Treasury bonds.

War-Shaken US Firms Slash 108,000 Jobs in March

Washington, April 4 (AFP) - US businesses, partially paralyzed by the build-up and launch of the US-led war on Iraq, axed 108,000 jobs in March, the government said. The unemployment rate held steady at 5.8 percent.

"Bottom line: the economy is a casualty of the war," said BMO Financial Group economist Sal Guatieri. "We definitely need to see a conclusion to the conflict to see a revival of the US economy."

Uncertain Iraq Impact on US Economy

Los Angeles, April 2 (Reuters) - How the war in Iraq affects the US economy largely depends on its length and whether it sends oil prices soaring, former US Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker said on Wednesday.

"The impact is too early to judge, it depends on how the war goes," Volcker said in an interview with Reuters before making a speech here.

"If the war doesn't end quickly and gets worse you get a high oil price. If it turns out well you get a lower oil price and the opposite effect on the economy perhaps."

Volcker said the world faced pressures larger than just the economy. "I do think we live in a very uncertain and difficult world, not just for economic reasons but more importantly for other reasons," he said.

(Ben Berkowitz)

Analysts' Take:

IMF Managing Director Horst Koehler: A Prolonged War Hampers World Economic Recovery

Q: What impact will the war in Iraq have on the world economy?

A: It depends how long the war lasts and how it goes. But even a short war will hinder the already slow recovery of the world economy. Many factors influencing the economy are still unstable and most of the investors are holding wait-and-see attitudes.

Q: Is there any possibility of an economic recession?

A: There will be, if the war lasts too long. Basic preconditions include an over-high oil price, a slowdown of US consumption and financial crises in countries which have high demand for inflow of capital but weak defenses against financial risks.

Q: Should the Americans stop boosting the strength of the US dollar?

A: I don't want to say this or that to the Americans. But in the middle term at least, the US has to control its budget deficit and raise savings. Therefore, economic structural reforms are not issues only to Europe and Japan, but to the US as well.

Q: Can the Euro block replace the

US as a safer harbor to investors?

A: It's better to say that a successful euro economy can strengthen the reliability of the world currency system. To achieve this target, the euro block has to show strong economic performance first, as well as capability in political affairs.

It's too early to discuss whether the euro can replace the US dollar. But I believe that the annual inflow of over \$100 billion in overseas capital into the US during the middle 1990s will never happen again, and that this has made America's tremendous current account deficit a big problem for the world economy. We need joint cooperation by various economic blocks to solve this problem.

Q: How can they cooperate to solve the problem?

A: The world economic recovery cannot depend on the economic growth of the US alone. Europe and Japan can and must contribute more in this process.

Europeans have their advantages, such as higher savings and healthier state budget situations. Compared with the US, Europe has not yet fully explored the potential in its job market and economic growth. These are the places where we can do something at present.

(Xinhua News Agency)

Judging Which Firms to Revitalize Is Thorny

Tokyo, April 3 (Bloomberg News/International Herald Tribune) - Sadakazu Tanigaki has 10 trillion yen (\$85 billion) at his disposal to help bring ailing Japanese companies back to health. But some analysts and investors say the minister for industrial revitalization can do little more than keep them on life support.

The mandate of Tanigaki's agency, the Industrial Revitalization Corp. (IRC), is to buy non-performing loans and corporate debts of companies it deems viable. It is hoped that this will help Japan's struggling banks to reduce an estimated 52.4 trillion yen in bad loans - a cornerstone of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's program to revive the economy - while also helping a few deadbeat companies return to profitability.

The program, approved by Japan's parliament on April 2, is the latest in a string of efforts to support the economy since the collapse of Japan's asset bubble more than a decade ago. The efforts, including two bank bailouts and plans to buy 3 trillion yen in lenders' shareholdings, have done little so far to return Japan's economy to health or change the way banks do business.

Analysts' Take:

Takeshi Yamamoto, chief representative, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking, Beijing Office

This is good news for Japanese commercial banks trapped in bad loans like mine. Sumitomo Mitsui covered 1.07 trillion yen in bad loans using our profits last year, turning our year-end results into a net loss of 470 billion yen. Now, we can deliver the worst and most hopeless bad loans to the IRC and move forward.

The amount of bad loans in Japan is tremendous and increasing. Asset restructuring and venture bankruptcies have to go through complicated legal procedures. Most of the commercial banks prefer to forward this work to specialist companies. The newly established IRC is an official body, which can help make the asset management business more successful.

But in the meantime, nearly all commercial banks in Japan have their own bad asset management companies. It is still too early to say clearly how they will cooperate with this new half-government and half-private company.

Shigenori Okazaki, senior analyst, UBS Warburg, Japan

The IRC is not the first agency set up to buy bad loans from banks. The Resolution and Collection Corp. (RCC) was formed in 1995 originally to buy loans from failed lenders.

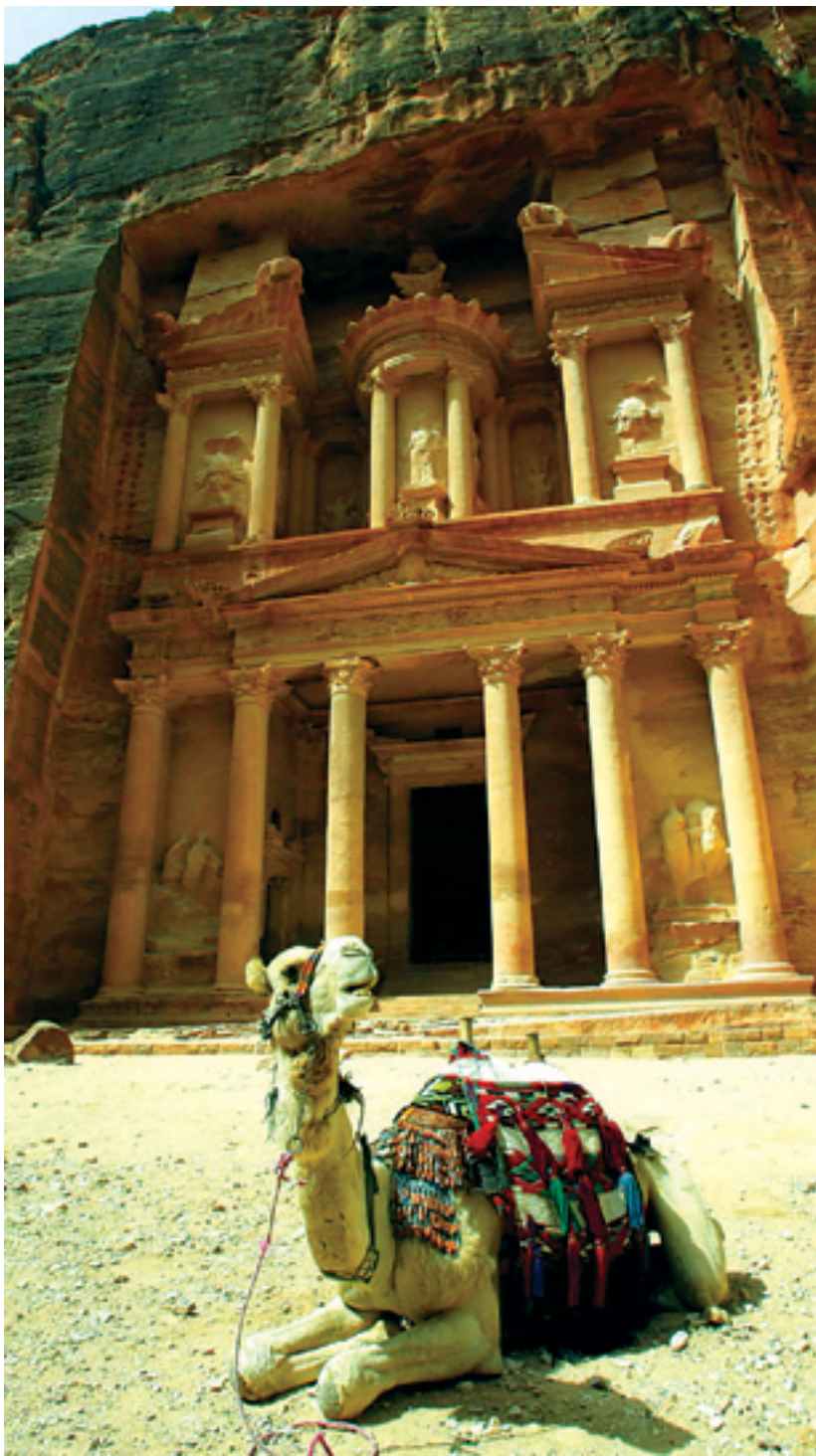
RCC started buying loans from solvent lenders in 1999, and has bought about 3.38 trillion yen worth of debt

since then.

The RCC paid an average of 3.6 percent of the loan value for the first 1.08 trillion yen of debt. Since a change to the law in January 2002, the RCC has nearly tripled its purchase price.

Japan's government spent 9.3 trillion yen in taxpayers money to bail out the country's largest banks in 1998 and 1999. The government still holds preferred shares and subordinated debts in six of the top seven banks, including Mizuho Financial Group Inc. and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group Inc.

Banks could be reluctant to sell debt to the new agency if the price is too low.



Anyone for a ride? No? A camel looks lonely in front of Petra, Jordan's world famous rose city. The tourist industry in the country has been hit hard by the war in Iraq.

Xinhua Photo

Energy and Insurance Stocks Lift European Markets

Brussels, April 1 (Dow Jones Business News) - European stocks climbed higher as investors shrugged off drab manufacturing data and focused on more positive news from Iraq this week.

Energy stocks were among the biggest gainers, after Deutsche Bank upgraded its recommendation on France's TotalFinaElf to "buy" from "hold," lifting the shares 2.8% to 119.20 euros in Paris. In London, BP advanced 3.6% to 416 pence and Shell Transport & Trading gained 3.2% to 395 pence.

Also faring well were stocks that had

suffered heavily earlier this year, especially insurance stocks. In Frankfurt, Munich Re was up 5.5% to 55.4 euros, while Allianz traded up 3.8% at 47.1 euros. In London, Royal & Sun Alliance gained 6.2% to 73 pence.

On Paris's SBF 120 index, reinsurer Scor rose 0.6% to 3.55 euros despite reporting a second straight year of heavy losses. Chief Executive Denis Kessler said measures designed to drag the company back to profitability are starting to bear fruit.

Analysts' Take:

David Jia, senior financial market analyst

It is understandable that energy stocks are climbing higher now the war in Iraq is going well, because Iraq is the second largest oil reservoir in the world.

But the French reinsurer Scor reported a loss of 455 million euros in 2002, higher than expected. And the global insurance industry is still in the shadow of fraudulent auditing reports and large business deficits from last year.

There are two possible explanations for the rise in share price of the insurance companies in Europe:

Individually, all insurance companies are restructuring. Scor has taken several prominent steps in this regard.

The insurance company, under the leadership of the new CEO Dennis Kessler, is refocusing its business to short-term life insurance and reinsurance businesses that have suffered less than property insurance.

It dropped the risk management company in Bermuda, Commercial Risk Partners, which was running at a heavy loss. In January this year, Scor successfully issued 381 million euro bonds, paving ways for new business exploration. In addition, the company benefits from the rising global premiums caused by the war and an unclear picture of the world economy.

Other insurers like Allianz and Munich Re are also restructuring, and have raised the percentages of risk management reserves against their business volumes, as required by the official supervising agencies in their countries.

The success of the coalition forces in the war in Iraq has dismissed all doubts and speculation in the market before the war. Now, the market believes the war damages will be much lighter than expected and that the conflict is coming to an end.

Price fluctuation is inevitable in financial markets. Small ups and downs will be seen in the insurance companies' shares. In addition, the war is not yet over. Any turnaround on the battlefield will cause fluctuations on the stock market. In other words, the market is still fragile and sensitive.

IMF Forecasts Weak Global Recovery



IMF Managing Director Horst Koehler

Reuters Photo

Washington, April 9 (AP) - The world will probably experience "tepid" economic growth this year even with a quick end to the Iraq war because of a host of other problems, the International Monetary Fund said in its latest "World Economic Outlook", Wednesday.

Global growth has been adjusted to 3.2 percent for this year from an expectation of 3.7 percent, mainly due to a temporary jump in oil prices.

The IMF warned that even the reduced forecast might not be realized because of various threats ranging from lingering shocks from the bursting of the US stock market bubble and rising budget and trade deficits, to rigid labor markets in Europe and a weak banking system in Japan.

(Martin Crutsinger)



Headquarters of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna, Austria

AFP Photo

US Expects OPEC Output to Remain

Washington, April 8 (Reuters) - OPEC's crude oil production is expected to remain at 26.5 million barrels per day for the rest of the year, despite some calls for the cartel to trim output and boost prices.

The 10 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries bound by quotas pumped about 2 million bpd above the official limit of 24.5 million bpd in March. OPEC's president has proposed an emergency cartel meeting for April 24 to discuss cutting production.

"We think OPEC crude production should be at 26.5 million bpd, maybe a little more than that" to 26.8 million bpd, Guy Caruso, the head of the US Energy Information Administration said earlier this week.

(Chris Baltimore)

Duisenberg Agrees to Stay



European Central Bank President Wim Duisenberg

AP Photo

Wouliagmeni, Greece, April 5 (AFP) - The head of the European Central Bank, Wim Duisenberg, said he would accept a proposal by European Union finance ministers to remain in his post until a successor was appointed, due to uncertainty over a French candidate previously tipped for the post.

Duisenberg, who will be 68 in June, took the high-profile post in 1998 and had initially been due to serve a half term and step down this July to make way for his successor proposed by France, Jean-Claude Trichet.

However Trichet, who heads France's central bank, has been under investigation in connection with an accounting scandal at the state-owned Credit Lyonnais bank. Trichet's trial is expected in June.

New Oil Fields in Venezuela Attract Foreign Investors



Ali Rodriguez, president of the Venezuelan state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA

AP Photo

Caracas, Venezuela, April 2 (AP) - Foreign energy companies could invest up to \$1 billion to develop new oil fields in Venezuela, the country's oil minister said Wednesday.

ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell Group, TotalFinaElf and Statoil are among the firms operating in Venezuela that can develop the newly found Tomoporo oil field, with an estimated 1.5 billion barrels of light and medium crude, according to the state Venpress news agency.

Two other fields with an estimated 1 billion barrels could be added to the development plan.

Lawyers Allowed to Interview Clients

By Lily Li

As of last Friday, in the process of investigating criminal cases, lawyers can ask suspects for more detailed information than merely basic facts like names and addresses.

The change is a reflection of the release of the new trial Rule Concerning Problems When Lawyers Interview Defendants and Suspects In Prison by the Beijing High People's Court, Beijing People's Procuratorate, Beijing Department of Public Security, Beijing Bureau of State Security and Bureau of Justice.

The rule is the first official docu-

ment in Beijing to directly address the defense of suspects and defendants' legal rights.

Zhang Qing, president of the Beijing Lawyers' Association, said this is a significant reform and one the 7,700 lawyers in the capital have looked forward to for a long time. "It ensures lawyers' rights to join in criminal cases and defends suspects' legal rights and interests," he added.

According to the rule, from queries filed with related departments of the local government or through interviews conducted with suspects

in prison, lawyers can determine what their clients have been accused of and get details about cases.

In cases not connected to matters of national security, related departments should give official letters to lawyers and arrange for them to interview their clients within 48 hours of the lawyers filing a proper request. For cases related to national security, said departments should decide on whether to grant lawyers' requests for interviews within five days of the filing of an application.

Lawyers and law offices can directly report departments and per-

sonnel that violate this law to their supervisory bodies, which should respond to such charges in 10 days.

"This rule provides a policy safeguard for lawyers in handling criminal cases. Without this, we can only offer suspects limited services and suspects' legal rights cannot be protected," said Fu Jianwu, a lawyer with Huarong Assets Management.

"Although it's not as detailed as those in developed countries, this rule has a wide range of contents," he added. "To some extent, it provides for the better protection of human rights."

Air China Loses in Discount Ticket Case

By Lily Li

Last Wednesday, the Beijing Haidian District Court ruled in favor of Hu Anchao, a teacher from the China University of Political Science and Law, in the lawsuit he had filed against Air China.

The airline was ordered to pay him 775 yuan and turn over 50 yuan to cover the court's expenses.

Hu filed the suit against the company for failing to give him full payment when he returned a discount ticket.

However, because it is still within the 15-day period in which Air China can file an appeal of the court's decision, he has yet to receive the money.

According to Ma Keli, the judge in the case, this is the first time Air China has been sued over a discount ticket dispute.

Hu bought a ticket for a flight from Beijing to Shenzhen at the Lantian Baiyun Ticket Agency on September 18, 2002, priced at 910 yuan, a 40 percent discount off the original fare. When his plans changed, he went back to the agency to switch to a flight on September 19.

The agent he dealt with said they would have to charge him half of the full ticket price to process the return, which came to 755 yuan.

He immediately disputed the decision on the grounds that it went against the "tourist notice" printed inside his ticket. According to that notice, the airline was only entitled to charge five percent of the ticket price for processing the return.

The staff of the travel agency responded they had to obey Air China's general rule of charging 50 percent of a ticket's price for handling its return.

Later, Hu went to the airline's Beijing sales department, but Ms. Pan, a manager there, refused to give him the rest of the money or show him the regulation, claiming it was an internal company document.

Finally, Hu filed suit against the country's largest air carrier on October 8 last year, and full civil hearings of the case were held in the Haidian District Court on November 11 last year and again last Wednesday.

His lawyer, Sun Maohang, argued in court that Air China and the travel agent violated the rules of honesty in The Contract Law of the People's Republic of China by refusing to show Hu the documents in question.

The lawyers for Air China responded that the company was upholding a special notice issued by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) on May 14, 2001, that states that for the return of discount tickets, 50 percent of their original price should be charged as a processing fee.

The court ruled that the airline had misled Hu, putting them in violation of the Contract Law. Air China was deemed fully responsible, since the Lantian Baiyun Ticket Agency is just an agent of the company.



By Lily Li

Television is not the only way to bring the war in Iraq to your home - some Beijingers are finding the lighter side of the conflict and purchasing small clay models of Saddam Hussein and President Bush.

One person thrilled about this trend is Hou Defeng, who sells clay figurines in a small shop in the basement of the Beijing Arts and Crafts World Building in Wangfujing. He said that since the start of the war, he has sold around 10 little Saddams, which take him half-an-hour to make and cost 25 yuan, per day.

Photo by Aily

Photographer Fooled By Phony "Press Officer"

By Ivy Zhang

Wei Haiyang, a photographer from colphoto.com, came away from 2003 China Fashion Week at the Beijing Hotel on March 29 nearly empty handed, as his IBM 2232 portable computer and Cannon 2035 camera lens were stolen by a clever thief posing as a press officer.

Wei reported the theft to the police, who have announced the impostor is still at large. However, a photo of Wei and the thief taken by another photographer at the event is an important clue that may lead to the arrest of the man and the return of Wei's possessions.

The thief first approached Wei at around 5 pm that afternoon, and gave him a card that said he was a press officer for the event.

Later, the photographer headed to Exhibition Hall C in the hotel to meet his colleague, Miss Jiang. The press officer went with him, but was stopped

by a guard at the entrance to the hall because his ticket was invalid. Wei proceeded inside and ran into the man again later in the hall.

"I asked him how he got in with an out-of-date ticket. He muttered he was brought in by someone," Wei said. He then gave his bag to Jiang and started taking more photos.

In Wei's absence, the press officer approached Jiang, claiming to be Wei's friend. He told Jiang that Wei had asked him to bring over the bag, and said he would leave his coat with Jiang. The young woman had no reason to suspect the man, and handed the bag over as asked.

When the show ended at 8:30 pm, the alleged press officer was nowhere to be found. Wei was upset about the lost equipment, worth around 30,000 yuan, but then remembered that when he was in the other room with the man, a photographer from the *Huaxia Times* took a picture of them.



The police hope someone can identify the thief (right).

"The photographer used black and white film for the shot, which was pretty quick. When the impostor heard the click of the camera, he raised his left hand to cover his face and demanded the photographer stop taking his picture," said Wei.

Now Wei and the police are hoping that photograph, with its exposure of the thief's eyes and jaw, will be enough for him to be identified and brought to justice.

Desperate Woman Talked Back from the Edge

By Ivy Zhang

After two and a half tense hours, reporters from the *Beijing Times* and local police managed to talk a suicidal 32-year-old woman out of jumping from a 27-story building last Thursday. She was desperate after years of abuse by her husband.

The woman, surnamed Dai, climbed to the top of an unfinished building in the Jingtong Garden Res-

idential Compound at 5 am. Four hours later, she called the *Beijing Times* hotline and told reporters there that her husband was very abusive and she wanted to die.

The paper immediately dispatched reporters, who climbed to the roof of the building to talk to Dai. At 11:45 am, she stepped back from the edge and was led away by the police.

On Monday, Dai filed for divorce from her husband, surnamed Meng, at the Chaoyang District People's Court.

Dai, who works in clothing retail, married Meng, currently unemployed, two years ago. The couple has a one-year-old son.



Beijing Times reporter Lan He talks Dai out of taking her life.

Photo by Hu Xuebai

Swifts Hightailing It out of Town

By Ivy Zhang

Local biologists have identified another unfortunate effect of the wholesale razing of Beijing's *hutongs*, the old alleys lined with one-story houses that used to criss-cross the city.

Those houses were the favorite nesting places of the Beijing swift, the world's fastest black bird, and their destruction has led the birds to fly the coop.

Today, only around 3,000 Beijing swifts are believed to still live in the capital. That number was released Saturday by a team of bird specialists from the Beijing Forestry Bureau, Beijing Wildlife Protection Management Post and Beijing Normal University, based on two years of field research at 65 sites around the city.

Last weekend's announcement was followed by the launch of the Beijing Swift Protection Campaign, in which artificial nests and wooden towers used by the birds to roost will be set up around the city and the swifts' numbers will be closely observed.

The birds' migratory patterns bring them to the capital from late March to early August every year. "The number of Beijing swifts has fallen tremendously," said Zhang Zhengwang, a professor at the College of Life Sciences of Beijing Normal University.

According to Zhang, in 1974, Zheng Guangmei, another professor from that university, traveled around the Forbidden City by bicycle one day and counted 400 swallows. Sixteen years later, another professor from Capital Normal University rode the same route, but only saw 60 of the birds.

These swallows prefer to build their nests under house roofs, and with all the *pingfang*, or flat houses, that originally made up this city, Beijing used to be a perfect place for them to breed. In the past decade, however, many of those old homes have been razed to make way for high rises and highways.

"With nowhere to build their nests, less swallows can stay here," said Zhang.



City Asks Locals to Get Green Thumbs

By Ivy Zhang

As green returns to the city, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Parks is asking individuals and businesses from all over the capital to take a personal stake in the beautification of Beijing.

The bureau is asking people to either fund, at a cost of 6.5 yuan per square meter, or personally work to protect grassy areas around the city.

The bureau is offering Beijingers three ways to get green. One is to simply put up the money and allow the bureau to take care of the work. The second is to pay for the planting of vegetation on a piece of barren land after receiving approval of price and location from the bureau. Last, people can sign up to protect a plot of green land by personally providing regular water and removing litter.

People and companies that make such contributions will be rewarded with small plaques of metal or other material bearing their name set up on their protected plots, which they will also have the right to name.

"This is meant as an exercise in public welfare and natural protection, not advertising," said Bai Haiyan, an employee of the examination and law enforcement division of the Beijing Garden Bureau.

Coke Moonlights as Paperboy

By Lily Li

On Tuesday, Beijing Coca-Cola Beverages Co. held a ceremony for the donation of 2,000 copies of *Beijing Youth Daily*, worth a total newsstand price of 700,000 yuan, to students at Beijing University. Since the beginning of April, the company has been working to provide one paper for each of the 2,000 dorm rooms at the university every day. Coca-Cola will continue its efforts for one year.

This activity was launched in response to the long-running "one newspaper for one dormitory room" campaign run by the Beijing Communist Youth League.

Buying Public Transport

I have long supported the idea of running the whole public transportation system in a city privately rather than by state-owned firms. Shiyan is the only city that offered me the opportunity to try.'
— Zhang Chaorong

I t may be good that the public transportation system is under the control of an individual as there will be more flexibility. But without outside competition, the price will be decided by the will of that entrepreneur or the company. What if the entrepreneur or the company becomes completely money-minded?'
— Su Haihe

I t's increasingly abnormal for a government or a state-owned company to run such utilities, although it's still the case in China, as a result of the planned economy.'
— Mao Yushi



The bus they used to take.

Photo by Ou Ya

By Su Wei

Zhang Chaorong, general manager of Wuma Taxi Company in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, has just purchased the operation rights of all 22 public transportation routes in Shiyan, Hubei Province for the next 18 years, at the price of eight million yuan per year. He bought the rights from the state-owned Public Transportation Company of Shiyan.

Zhang will form a new company called Public Transportation Corporation in which he will hold a 68 percent stake. The rest will go to the more than 1,000 staff.

There is no state capital in the new company at all. Over 800 former staff have been laid off.

According to a report in *Hangzhou Daily* on April 4, Zhang has invested over 100 million yuan in his new concern. Twenty eight million yuan was used in purchasing 100 luxury buses to replace the current ones. Zhang also paid compensation for the laid-off workers.

Two years ago, Zhuge Zhichang, general manager of Lanxi Public Transportation Company, Zhejiang Province, bid for operating rights of 12 public transportation routes in Lanxi for a period of 20 years.

Zhughe owns a 54 percent stake in that company which is thriving, according to *Hangzhou Daily*.

One and a half years ago, individual investors were invited by the Shanghai government to run its public transportation routes. By now, 53 passenger transportation companies have bought the operation rights of 949 public transportation routes in Shanghai.

On December 27, last year, the Ministry of Construction announced that it would encourage investment from non-government and foreign sources in the construction and operation of public utilities, such as water supply, gas

supply and public transportation. **Zhang Chaorong, general manger of Wuma Taxi Company, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province**

I have long supported the idea of running the whole public transportation system in a city privately rather than by state-owned firms. Shiyan is the only city that offered me the opportunity to try.

I know that there is not too much profit in the operation of public transportation. But as long as there is a small profit, I am determined to work hard to obtain it. In fact, I am accumulating my experience for the management of long-distance transportation routes, though at the moment the government does not allow individuals to have such operation rights.

I do not think there will be malicious seeking of profit after my purchase. I have set severe regulations to discipline the staff and the government can supervise my management.

As long as the local government supports me I am certain there will be no difficulties that I cannot overcome.

Yang Guoshun, vice secretary general of Shiyan government, Hubei Province

The attitude of the government is very clear. We all support Zhang's obtaining the operation rights of the public transportation routes.

First, the government has been released from the financial difficulties it once had. We no longer need to pay an allowance to the public transportation company to help them overcome their financial problems.

Second, both the company staff and the local people will benefit.

Morals, Legally Required

Jiangsu Province organizes professional morality tests for job hunters

By Lily Li

Starting this month, job hunters in Jiangsu are going to have to start passing moral examinations. Anyone who wants to work for a PR department, a human resources department or become a psychological consultant, marketing analyst, salesman, secretary or housing management administrator will have to pass a "professional morality" test.

It's part of the professional examination that people are legally required to pass before applying for jobs. The examination takes 30 minutes. The full score is 100 and the pass mark is 60. The moral part only makes up 20 percent of the total score but if you get less than 60 percent in the morality section, you've failed the whole test.

"We're applying it to these seven professions for now, but we'll soon apply it to more," said Xiong Yang, director of Nanjing Profession Skills Authentication Center. She said the number of examinees who will take this examination in Jiangsu Province in 2003 will be at least 10,000.

Textbooks explaining what professional morality is can be found in big bookstores, and examinees will have to take at least 20 classes in morality training.

"This is the only legal morality examination for professional qualifications," said Ms. Xiong. Without the approval of the Department of Labor and Social Security, companies and departments are not allowed to organize their own examinations for professional certificates.

Tianjin is set to follow Jiangsu's lead. Anyone wishing to work in a PR department will have to

take the professional morality examination as of May, 2003.

Zhao Chuanhui, director of Tianjin PR Training Center said the previous professional qualification examinations only tested theory and skills. "Making morality part of the examination shows that society demands more attention from employees to basic honesty and ethics," she said.

However, Shan Shibing, a writer for *Star Daily* said professional morality is just a kind of behavior standard that can't be measured through examinations.

Can professional morality be examined? What are the standards for examining it? Opinions follow:

Xu Bin, Internet surfer at www.People.com

Everybody is talking about professional morality but who can explain what it is? I think it's no more than employees obeying company discipline.

But different companies and departments have different rules and requirements for employees. What the employees should do can only be clear after they know the rules of the company where they are working. How can authentication centers make such a morality standard suitable for all companies?

What's more, assessing employees' morality level by examination is too simple because examinations can't reflect what a person really thinks. This examination is of no use.

Tan Ying, employee in the Human Resources Management Department of Datang Telecom Technologies Industrial Group

Morality can't be decided by

an examination, but if we don't include it in the examination, I don't think certificates for professional qualifications can be comprehensive. Without such examinations, many people might simply ignore the issue of professional morality.

Morality or professional ethics are vital factors for companies in judging an employee.

Liu Ming, student of philosophy at Renmin University of China

This morality examination won't solve the problem, but it is meaningful and shouldn't be dismissed.

First, it can improve workers' knowledge about professional ethics. Although knowing about something is different from putting it into practice, knowledge is better than ignorance.

Secondly, it can create a more moral environment. If they have to pass an examination in a subject, examinees will pay great attention to it. The more people pay attention to this, the higher the level of morality society will have.

Thirdly, it is a warning to people who don't care about the importance of morality. This examination can send out a signal that these industries do not welcome unprincipled employees.

Xue Jun, a lawyer in Taihe Law Office

There is always a morality examination for lawyers before they can get their qualifications. Football players and teachers also have to pass such examinations.

So it doesn't seem strange to me that this should apply to occupations like marketing. Although

Zhang promised to raise staff salaries and compensate those who were laid-off. Passengers will be charged the same as before even though they will now be taking air-conditioned buses.

Last, leaders of the former company will be unable to take advantage of their position to get illegal payments through renting routes to operators.

Su Haihe, a bus driver in Beijing

I cannot predict the result of an entrepreneur purchasing the operation rights of public transportation in a city. But I am sure that the reason the local government supports the purchase is that it wants to get rid of the burden of public transportation and has an easy way to make money. There wasn't much profit in it for them. Instead, every year the government had to give an allowance to public transportation companies.

It may be good that the public transportation system is under the control of an individual as there will be more flexibility. But without outside competition, the price will be decided by the will of that entrepreneur or the company. What if the entrepreneur or the company becomes completely money-minded?

I do not think this privatization will occur in Beijing, as it would cause chaos.

Bastiaan Bink, Manager/Technical Consultant

I wouldn't have a problem with an entrepreneur running the city's public transportation, as long as there is effective supervision of quality and price-level of the services by an independent and qualified third party. The entrepreneur's license should be revoked if his enterprise doesn't meet the basic standards required by the local government and public.

If enterprises are allowed to compete with state run organizations in open tendering procedures to come up with plans for improving the public transport system and the best plans are chosen and executed, the public may profit from better services in the end.

Mao Yushi, economist

It is very common around the world, especially in developed countries that public utilities such as public transportation are run by entrepreneurs. It's increasingly abnormal for a government or a state-owned company to run such utilities, although it's still the case in China, as a result of the planned economy.

The government should not have the right to run a business. I think it is a good thing that an entrepreneur is allowed and able to have the operation rights of the public transportation in a city. If the government fails to run the service properly, no one can point it out and make the government correct the situation. Usually it is only the government that has the power to judge its behavior.

There could also be some negative effects due to the character of these industries, such as the emergence of monopolies. Seeking profit could lead to higher prices and lack of attention to service quality. The government would then have a role in supervision though it may not play the role effectively and efficiently. The media and consumers should also be actively involved in supervision of the individual operation of these public utilities.

SOUND BITES

"Both India and China have the potential to be among the world's largest economies in 25 years' time. If Singapore can serve as a bridge to facilitate economic interaction between these two giant economies, can you imagine the benefits that will accrue to all three countries?"

— Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong, speaking while making a strong pitch for free trade agreements between the three countries.

"The game is over. My hope now is peace, for everybody. I hope that peace will prevail and the Iraqi people at the end of the day will have a peaceful life."

— Iraq's UN ambassador, Mohammed Al-Douri said on Wednesday in his first admission that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein no longer controls Baghdad. The ambassador had been a defender of Saddam's government as its chief UN representative.

"The Iraqi war launched by the US pre-emptive attack clearly proves that a war can only be prevented and the security of the country and the nation can only be ensured by an effective deterrent force."

— KCNA, North Korea's state-run news agency. It did not specifically refer to nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

By Chen Ying

By Su Wei

On March 16 this year, Wu Zixuan, a 40-day-old baby from Sijiqing, Haidian District, became one of the first people registered as a farmer to become a “Beijinger”, by being granted a Beijing city dweller’s *hukou* (permanent residence).

There’s a big difference between the status of a city dweller and the dreaded “*waidiren*” (non-Beijinger) tag. The latter suffer everything from a lack of equal rights to outright discrimination. But it seems the government is ready to allow more people into the charmed circle of Beijing city dwellers.

“I cannot believe it. I cannot believe it. It is too good. It is too good to be true.” Liu Jie, the baby’s mother, was too excited to say anything else during *Beijing Today’s* interview.

Besides Wu, five newborn babies from farmers’ families have recently been granted permanent residence as city dwellers.

“Only city dwellers can get medical insurance. Now we will be able to manage the expenses for my mother’s treatment.”
— Wang Cunbao, a farmer in Changgou Town, Fangshan District, near Beijing.

According to Beijing Public Security Bureau, all babies born to Beijing farmers’ families this year can choose to be registered as city dwellers, even if their parents are farmers or they themselves have been registered as farmers.

How open?

Obviously this is the right year to be born. But older Beijing children are not so happy.

Shao Xin, 15, faces a tough choice this year. Being registered as a farmer in Changping District, near Beijing, the likeliest way for him to become a Beijinger is to go to a high school and then university. But he says he has no interest in further study at all. “I like cooking and I want to be a cook,” he said.

But as a farmer, Shao cannot enroll for a cookery occupational school. He could enroll in certain other kinds of occupational schools relating to agriculture or being a teacher, but even that wouldn’t necessarily gain him the status of a Beijinger. “If I stop my studies, I will be like my parents, having little to do all day. The fields are being taken to build houses. We have few fields to cultivate.”

Wang Cunbao, a farmer in Changgou Town, Fangshan Dis-



trict, near Beijing, is a happy man these days after having found out about a new policy from the Beijing Public Security Bureau.

He says by the end of this year he, his wife, his three-year-old daughter and his 68-year-old mother will be registered as city dwellers instead of farmers. “By the end of this year I will have been a taxi driver for two years, which meets one requirement to be registered as a city dweller. The most important thing is that Changgou is one of the 47 towns approved by the bureau for residents to choose to become Beijingers.”

Wang says that being registered as a city dweller will make it far easier to treat his mother’s lung cancer. “Only city dwellers can get medical insurance. Now we will be able to manage the expenses for my mother’s treatment.” He stopped talking and looked serious for a moment. “This time the government must mean what they say.”

To be a Beijinger

Zhang Tao, a software engineer from Heilongjiang, came to Beijing three years ago. He says he is used to being treated as a non-Beijinger. He says for a two-bedroom apartment in Haidian District he rents with his four colleagues, the monthly fee for waste collection is 20 yuan. “But in a nearby living community the fee is four yuan per household.”

Zhang feels it’s common for *waidiren* to be charged more.

All the non-Beijingers interviewed by *Beijing Today* said they have to put up with inconvenience or even “unfairness” because of their status as outsiders. One example is that local car dealers usually insist that non-Beijingers pay the full amount up front when buying a car instead of allowing them to pay in installments. “But there is hope for us to become Beijingers. It is merely a matter of time. We will have roots in Beijing one day,” Zhang said.

It’s gonna cost you

Li Minghao, from Zhejiang, owns a bar in Sanlitun, Chaoyang District. He was excited to discover there was a clear policy relating to private entrepreneurs becoming registered as Beijingers, which became effective on October 1, 2001.

“But it seems very difficult for me,” he said with some worry in his eyes. “The policy says entrepreneurs must pay annual taxation of over 800,000 yuan for three years or have paid over three million yuan over the last three years. Also, either their company must employ 100 Beijingers, or at least 90 percent of their staff must be Beijingers. So in effect, it’s only a dream for me. I pay the same tax as Beijingers but I’m no nearer to becoming one of them.”

Li, a businessman from Fujian province, signed an investment contract with the government of Wangzuo Town, Fengtai District, Beijing in Oc-

tober last year. “The reason I’m investing in Wangzuo Town is so that my family can get Beijing permanent residence,” he says.

According to the government in Wangzuo Town, a family of non-Beijingers with no more than four people can be registered as Beijingers if they buy a commercial apartment there, as well as investing 500,000 yuan in local industry and contributing 20,000 yuan per person to city infrastructure costs.

“Almost every day we receive calls from people wanting to become Beijingers,” said Zheng Chunhua, Director of the Party Office of Wangzuo Town. “The quota of 50 people for this year is almost used up.”

It seems there’s no shortage of people willing to pay through the nose to get their Beijinger status. In 2001, the annual quota of 300 people allowed to become Beijingers in Xiaotangshan Town, Changping District, was used up by September that year. Around 700 non-Beijingers have been on the waiting list since the end of last year.

In Taishitun Town, Miyun District, around 100 non-Beijingers are waiting for this year’s quota to open.

According to the Beijing Public Security Bureau, over 7,000 households including around 20,000 non-Beijingers in small towns in Beijing such as Xiaotangshan in Changping, Yangsong in Huairou, Songzhuang in Tongzhou and Changgou in Fangshan had become registered

Registration Department of Beijing Public Security Bureau, the current population of Beijing is already putting “enough pressure” on the city management.

A member of the department, who refused to give her name, said, “If more people are registered as Beijingers, there are certain to be more difficulties in housing, transportation, education and water supply.”

Zeng Xiangquan, professor of Renmin University, says the current permanent residence system in China is a result of the planned economy, which hinders the development of the modernization of agriculture.

He says in most cities, the residence registration policies are actually set by local governments in order to protect the employment of local people from the influx of non-local labor, resulting in the restraining of the free flow of labor and human resources.

“There are many examples of the failure of the current household registration system to control migration, decreasing the credibility of the national population census,” he said.

“During the national population survey, around two million people were not registered in Shaanxi Province; nearly 10 million people were not registered in Hunan Province; and 130,000 people who were dead were still registered in Chongqing.”

In his opinion, the worst aspect is that Chinese citizens are divided into different social strata such as agricultural and non-agricultural people, permanent residents and temporary ones.

History of China’s permanent residence system

The first period: Before 1958, a period of free immigration.

The second period: Between 1958 and 1978, a period with stringent control.

In 1958, with the carrying out of Household Management Regulations, permanent residence in China was divided into agricultural and non-agricultural. The agricultural population was barred from migrating to cities, in order to maintain social stability and overcome the insufficient supply at that time.

The third period: After 1978, a semi-open period.

After the Cultural Revolution, society faced new problems, such as the return of young intellectuals from rural areas to cities and farmers coming to cities. Changing residence registration from rural areas to cities and from small cities to large ones was forbidden.

In 1984, the central government allowed farmers to be registered as residents of small towns on condition they were able to pay for their own meals themselves rather than relying on the government.

In July 2001, the local government in Ningbo, Jiangsu Province allowed farmers to be registered as city dwellers after migrating to cities.

One month later, farmers living in small towns in Shandong province were allowed to be registered as city dwellers.

In the second half of 2001, people in Jilin, Hunan, Guangdong, Fujian and Liaoning were all given the status of city dwellers.

By the end of December 2001, over 1.38 million people in Tianjin, Liaoning, Jiangsu, Henan, Chongqing and Xinjiang had become registered as city dwellers.

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‘A family is powerful in the village if there are many brothers in the family. Wei just thought we couldn’t do anything even after we knew what happened.’

‘Though it meant suffering for my daughter, I would rather let her bear the baby. I wouldn’t be able to bear it if Wei escaped punishment,’ the mother said.

Rape of the Innocent

By Jin Lai / Chen Ying

If the baby had survived, A Xiang (pseudonym) would have become an unmarried mother at the age of only 13.

The family alleges that A Xiang was raped by Wei Jinjia, 49, who lives in the same village near Longhai, Fujian Province. They are now waiting for the result of a DNA test to prove their case.

A Xiang took induced labor surgery last Friday morning, two weeks before normal labor was due to begin. The female baby was stillborn. Samples for the DNA test, including the baby’s blood and amniotic fluid and A Xiang and Wei’s blood have

been sent to Xiamen Blood Center.

Summer nightmare

A Xiang graduated from Yujiang Village Primary School in Jiaomei Town last summer. The Village is famous for its mushroom production, so to help support her family, A Xiang went to work in Wei’s mushroom factory in the village.

The family claims that the rape occurred a couple of days after A Xiang started working at the factory. A Xiang was the last worker at the workshop. Wei approached her, took off her clothes and raped her. Afterwards, Wei threatened A Xiang, saying they would both go to jail if she told anyone. Wei raped A

Xiang again several days later.

After that A Xiang refused to return to the workshop. But she still had to face the ordeal of seeing Wei in the village. Whenever she met Wei on the road she always ran away. She became more and more silent.

The parents noticed that A Xiang was becoming fatter towards the end of last year, but they did not pay much attention to it. But as the girl’s belly got bigger and bigger the family started to worry that she might have a tumor. So they took her to Shima Health Center in Longhai on February 18. The ultrasound test showed that A Xiang had been pregnant for about 31 weeks.

A Xiang told her parents what had happened. The next day, the parents took the girl to the local police station to report the case.

The rumor soon spread through the village. “The police may punish Wei, but it will be impossible for my daughter to stay in this village,” said her mother. A Xiang is so embarrassed she wanted to stay at home while her family went to the police station.

Meanwhile, Wei was still free, even though the local police told the family they were investigating the case. “A family is powerful in the village if there are many brothers in the family,” the mother said. Wei was born in a big family while A Xiang’s father only had one brother. “Wei just thought we couldn’t do anything even after we knew what happened.”

The evidence

Wei’s sister-in-law went to A Xiang’s home, saying Wei would compensate the family if they withdrew the case. But the parents refused to consider the suggestion. Then Wei began to circulate the rumor that A Xiang had slept with several other men and that the baby might not be his.

So the family realized that a

DNA test was the only way to prove their case. Medical experts advised them that the best thing to do would be for A Xiang to have an abortion and for a DNA test to be performed on the dead baby. But the parents were concerned that Wei may have pressured some of the local officials and that the evidence might be destroyed if A Xiang had an abortion. So they decided A Xiang should have the child.

The story became well-known thanks to several local newspaper reports. On February 28, Wei was detained by local police.

A Xiang’s family grew anxious that the case seemed to be making little progress. “The local police asked my daughter to take an induced abortion at first,” said Guo Rushan. The village family planning office also told the family that A Xiang should take induced abortion surgery.

But the parents refused to do it because they thought the baby was the only key evidence in the case. “Though it meant suffering for my daughter, I would rather let her bear the baby,” the mother said. “I wouldn’t be able to bear it if Wei escaped punishment.”

A new judicial clarification was released this January. It says that if an individual does not know the other party is under the age of 14, and if they had sexual relations on a consensual basis, then no crime has been committed so long as no severe consequences occur.

“But it’s impossible that Wei didn’t know my daughter’s age, because we live in the same village,” said the father.

Seeking justice

Meanwhile, the father was busy visiting government departments in his search for justice, from Jiaomei Town Police Station to the provincial public security bureau. He got the same answer each time that the

China Personality Ministry told *Beijing Today* that the standard of health check for civil servants is different from city to city.

However, Guangzhou Personality Bureau and Shenzhen Personality Bureau changed their standard of checkup last year. People who are just positive on hepatitis B surface antigen, hepatitis B surface antibody and hepatitis B envelope antibody won’t be eliminated from the selection of civil servants.

Beijing Personnel Bureau told *Beijing Today* that they are drawing up a new standard of check for civil servants.

“We haven’t accepted people who had any problem with their liver. The new standard, which will be finished by the end of the month, may have some changes in this regard,” said a member of the bureau.

“It’s always a sensitive topic in the health check. The number of people who are hepatitis B surface antigen positive is around a hundred million, nearly 10 percent of the population of the country.”

Psychological problems

“This event is an extreme example of the psychological fragility of today’s students,” said Wang Jianmin, psychology researcher from Zhejiang Province Education Science Institute.

Wang said he’d found that psychological problems were common among college students.

“With the pressure from an employment market that’s so competitive, college students face much higher pressure than before,” said Wang. “Some of them despair more easily than others. From time to time, college students commit suicide. Even so, this murder case was really a shock to me.”

China Education Ministry said that this year will see the highest ever rise in the number of graduates. Just in Zhejiang Province, there will be 90,000 graduates, an increase of 65 percent over last year.

“College students should wake up to the reality of the employment market as soon as possible,” Zhou Jiamin, director of the Student Administration Office of Zhejiang Province Education Bureau, told *Beijing Today*.

“Actually, ninety percent of students will be able to find jobs if they change their traditional concept of employment,” he said.

Zhou said the private economy was thriving in Zhejiang Province and that many profitable private enterprises would need talented graduates.

“It’s an outdated idea that only

local police station was in charge of the case.

A local official thought the family’s attempt to widen the investigation was improper. “It was just one month since the local police had started investigating the case. The police also need time to collect evidence properly,” said a village cadre, who requested anonymity.

“But the police did not even arrest Wei after our report. And they gave us no information about the case,” the mother told local media at the end of last month.

Doubting the local police’s efficiency, A Xiang and her father came to Beijing on March 25, seeking help from the capital’s higher authorities.

They visited the All-China Women’s Federation who contacted the Zhangzhou-in-Beijing Office. “I hope the Zhangzhou departments will deal with the case properly,” the father said.

Waiting for the result

After speaking to Longhai Criminal Police Group, the family agreed for A Xiang to take induced labor surgery at Longhai No.1 Hospital and have DNA test samples taken.

The family suggested inviting local journalists to witness the whole surgery process and DNA test. But the police refused to give permission for this because they thought it could obstruct the surgery and collection of data.

Armed Bank Robbers Sentenced to Death

By Ivy Zhang

Two pairs of brothers who robbed nearly two million yuan from a bank van leaving three people dead and five severely injured were sentenced to death in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, last Friday.

The death penalty was handed down for brothers Zhang Xianhui and Zhang Xianming and brothers Li Yanbo and Li Yanbin at Shenyang Intermediate People’s Court on charges of bombing, manslaughter and robbery. The defendants said they did not intend to appeal.

Another suspect in the case, named Zhang Xianguang, is still at large.

Beijing Today reported on February 14 that the robbery happened around 6 pm on January 18, Saturday, in front of the No. 1 outlet of Shenyang Commercial Bank, Liaoshen Branch, Shenyang.

The robbers hid the explosives somewhere in front of the bank. When the bank van came around, they ignited the explosives. One security guard and one cashier from the bank were killed immediately. Three or four of the men got into the van and shot the already injured driver dead.

public-owned work units are good places to go.”

Drawbacks in higher education

A director of the Employment Instruction Center of a renowned university in Beijing (he declined to give his name) revealed some of the drawbacks of Chinese higher education after he heard about Zhou’s murder case from *Beijing Today*.

“The incident will alarm all schools in China,” said the director. “If Zhou had had a healthy view of life and values, he wouldn’t have committed murder.”

“High schools usually only pay attention to teaching students how to pass examinations. China’s universities also neglect their responsibility to help students in the aspect of psychology.”

The director said that even though many universities have employment instruction centers, what they can do is quite limited.

“We have 10,000 graduates a year on average, but there are only nine employees in our center. Our main work is just collecting employment information for graduates,” said Lin Xiafen from the Employment Instruction Center of Zhejiang University, where Zhou was enrolled. “We have no time to help students with their psychological problems.”

But Lin added that the center holds optional psychological classes for junior and senior students. “Maybe we should provide more psychological services to students,” Lin admitted.

‘Zhou said that he was so depressed that he wanted to commit suicide. But he changed his mind and decided to confront the local government staff who were responsible for the selection,’ said *Dushi Kuaihao* on Saturday.

‘It’s always a sensitive topic in the health check. The number of people who are hepatitis B surface antigen positive is around a hundred million, nearly 10 percent of the population of the country,’ said an employee of Beijing Personnel Bureau.

College Student Murders Government Employee

By Sun Ming

A student from a well-known university killed a government employee and seriously wounded another on Thursday last week in Zhejiang Province after he was eliminated from a local civil servant examination.

Student becomes killer

Zhou Yichao, 22, was set to graduate from the Agriculture and Biology Technology School of Zhejiang University.

On January 23, Zhou entered for the selection of civil servants conducted by the local government of Xiuzhou District, Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province. The selection was for nine people from 157 candidates, mostly undergraduates.

Dushi Kuaihao, a local newspaper in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, said on Saturday that after the written and oral examinations, Zhou had ranked eighth. But his dream was about to be derailed.

Zhou and 12 other candidates took a health check on Tuesday last week. Zhou received a short message on his cell phone from another candidate on Wednesday night telling him he had been eliminated because the health check found he had a form of hepatitis B.

“Zhou said that he was so depressed that he wanted to commit suicide. But he changed his mind and decided to confront the local government staff who were responsible for the selection,” said *Dushi Kuaihao* on Saturday.

Zhou went to the Xiuzhou District Personnel Bureau after lunch

on Thursday and asked Gan Li (pseudonym), 36, the director of the Civil Servants Administration Office, whether he had succeeded in the selection. Zhou got a negative answer and the reason was his health.

“Zhou went to a bathroom nearby and took out a fruit knife he had brought with him. Zhou then returned. He stabbed Gan several times,” said *Qianjiang Evening News*, another newspaper in Hangzhou, on Friday.

Zhang Manping (pseudonym), 33, the director of the Human Resources Office of the bureau, was also in the office. She tried to intervene, but Zhou then attacked her. Several minutes later, staff members from other offices subdued Zhou.

Zhang died in the attack, having been stabbed ten times. Gan survived and was rushed to hospital.

“Zhou told us that the two employees had a bad attitude towards him and that they refused to present the report of his health check to him,” a policeman from Jiaxing Public Security Bureau told *Beijing Today*. “He doubted the fairness of the selection.”

The policeman said that Zhou’s classmates viewed him as an introvert. Zhou comes from a poor family. His mother is a projectionist in a small cinema and his father died ten years ago.

Health check questioned

Xiuzhou Personnel Bureau told *Beijing Today* that they eliminated Zhou from the selection of civil servants because he didn’t pass the health check.

“We completely abide by the health check enacted by Zhejiang Province Personnel Bureau,” said an employee of the Xiuzhou Personnel Bureau.

According to the standard, if someone is positive on hepatitis B surface antigen, hepatitis B surface antibody, hepatitis B envelope antibody or if their liver function is abnormal, they should be eliminated from the selection of civil servants.

“I think the standard is too strict,” Wang Yu, a surgeon of the Liver & Gallbladder Department of Chengdu Military Hospital, told *Beijing Today*.

“It’s reasonable to eliminate someone whose liver function is abnormal, because they might spread the disease to others. But quite a few people, like Zhou, are just positive in such a test. Their liver function is often completely normal.

“I think it’s cruel for them if they are also eliminated,” said Wang.

Jiaxing Personnel Bureau refused to tell *Beijing Today* whether they had found that Zhou’s liver function was normal or not.

Mr. Zheng, director of the Civil Servant Recruitment Office of Zhejiang Province Personnel Bureau, said that the health check had been approved by medical experts.

“It’s hard for me to say whether the standard is reasonable or not. China Personnel Ministry says that every province has the right to interpret the standard,” said Zheng who declined to publish his full name, “Most provinces enact the same standard as ours.”



O Lucky Man!

By Zhao Pu / Cao Yu

In your dreams, the lottery is a ticket to riches overnight. For most people it's just that: a dream. But for one football-mad 22-year-old, the lottery is a regular source of handy cash payouts. Liu Xiang (pseudonym) has won on China's football lottery six times last year. How much has he made? "Not as much as you'd think," he says, "it is a six-figure number though." Not bad. So what's his secret?

Knowledge, and "the right feeling"

When the Chinese football lottery started in October 2001, it had football fans around the country licking their lips. It involves placing bets on the outcome of

matches in five European leagues (the English Premier League, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga, the French Championnat and the Spanish Primera Liga).

Liu bought the football lottery tickets every week. "Even if you lose it makes the football matches more exciting," he says. "Especially the last few minutes of a match, which can be decisive not only to the result, but also the lottery buyers' dreams."

Liu's first victory came in the sixth week. "It was at the end of 2001," he recalls, "a second prize." Though the amount of the money was not very impressive, Liu was still overjoyed. He spent 200 yuan on a dinner with his friends, to celebrate his good

luck.

"It's not all about luck," he says. "Fifty percent is luck, and the rest is down to my knowledge of football."

Sadly, Liu doesn't have too many tips to contribute, even though his success has gained him a job as the writer of a lottery analysis column in a daily newspaper. If there is a technical factor in his repeated wins, he says it's his 10 years as a football fan. He's built up an encyclopedic knowledge of the five European leagues, and knows the world's top football teams and players well. This expertise cannot be acquired in a short period.

But there are lots of people who are football obsessives. How come they don't win all the time too? "Well, fifty percent of it is luck," Liu reiterates. Liu says he sometimes just has the "right feeling."

Before a recent match between AC Milan and lowly Atalanta, all the football experts would have told you that the Milanese giants would win at a stroll. Liu backed a draw. His choice seemed ridiculous but Milan came through for him and stuttered to a draw. "People came up to me afterwards. They were saying 'that was just a wild guess, right?' Others asked 'How come you have such foresight?' It was neither. I just had the right feeling. It's magical when that happens."

Lottery life

Liu's lottery life takes over every Wednesday. When his parents have gone to bed on Wednesday night, Liu will close the door of his room, get on the Internet and search for the necessary information. Then he will analyze each match and go

with his gut feeling.

"I never put too much pressure on myself," says Liu. "It's just an interesting game, which makes the football matches more exciting." Liu sits in front of his TV set or computer every weekend, waiting for the result. "Every goal in a match will make some lottery buyers jump up in ecstasy, and others whine in dismay," says Liu.

"I used to spend 200 to 300 yuan on the lottery every week, but now I have reduced the budget to 30 yuan," he says. "It doesn't depend on how much money you pour in. You could spend a million and get nothing, or win a million with just five yuan."

Many kinds of lottery magazines with "authoritative analysis" are published every Thursday and Friday. These publications sell by the vanload to lottery buyers desperate for some expert "tips".

Liu Xiang has little time for that kind of thing. "I don't trust those rules and tips in the magazines," he says. "There are no rules in a lottery." He admits that in the football lottery there is room for analysis, but in welfare lottery there is only luck. "Specialists often recommend a number saying it has not appeared for a long period, and could possibly be the next lucky result. That's ridiculous!"

Light-hearted

The lucky winners are always the minority. According to Liu, those who treat the lottery more playfully are more likely to be the winners. "Don't take it too seriously or hope for too much; luck often favors light-hearted people."

This is a lesson one of his friends learned the hard way. "My friend Zhang joined in a group purchase one time. They made the right choice and he knew he would win a first prize after watching all the matches of that week," he recalls. Zhang exulted over his success and believed he was going to be rich. "He thought he was going to get at least 100 thousand yuan out of it," says Liu.

Zhang drove to the suburbs for a celebration that night with his friends, and the next day he went to see his boss and resigned. "He was getting ready for a brand new start in life and couldn't wait to throw his boring job away."

But things didn't work out the way Zhang had planned. It turned out that lots of other people had guessed correctly as well and were also sharing in the payout. He still made several thousand yuan, but it wasn't exactly the jackpot he had in mind. When Zhang heard the news he fainted and had to be taken to hospital. "See? You shouldn't hope for too much," Liu says.

Cautious investment

"Lottery changes life" is the slogan blazed out by the lottery companies. But even a multi-winner like Liu says his victories haven't made a radical difference to his life. They have merely been "pleasant episodes".

Before playing the lottery, Liu had invested in the stamp market for over 10 years. "I began to collect stamps when I was 10 years old," says Liu. "It was just for fun at first. The beautiful pattern of a stamp was more appealing to me than its value."

That an interest can make

a profit was something Liu realized later. He earned his first big payout at the age of 16 from the stamp market. "I made about 20 thousand yuan," he says. That was a big sum of money for a middle school student.

Liu attributes his calmness in winning the lottery to his earlier experiences in the stamp market. "I've got used to it, lost and gained from an investment," says Liu. "The lottery is similar."

With the funds he collected from the stamp market and the lottery, Liu started his own business in 2001, a gift company providing souvenirs (mostly stamps) for personal and commercial purchase. Most of Liu's customers are small companies who buy his products and present them to their clients on festivals.

"Life is not a lottery. What you get out of it depends on how much you pay," says Liu. "Only hard work and commitment gets you a better life." Though he is still into the lottery and the stamp market, most of his time and energy goes into his stamp company.

"There was only myself in the company at first. And every single client was a challenge. I went around showing my products to every potential client and tried to convince them that my gifts were better and cheaper than what they had been buying before." Liu has now developed a stable customer group, and his company has grown to five people.

When will Liu win the next lottery prize? "Who knows? My girlfriend told me after I won the first time that good luck would not follow me for all my life. I always remember her words."

Photo by Tian Xiaotong

"Life is not a lottery. What you get out of it depends on how much you pay. Only hard work and commitment gets you a better life."

By Iris Miao

An exhibition of first-class jadeite and white jade were opened Tuesday at the Beijing Fine Arts and Crafts Museum in Wangfujing. It is the largest such specialized exhibition in recent years, according to Li Jian, secretary-general of the Beijing Jewelry Chamber of Commerce, and has attracted numerous dealers.

In recent years, China's domestic jewelry market has suffered from an influx of fakes and inferior quality pieces, "The mixing up of good and bad, fake and genuine, has had a detrimental effect on prices, it has been quite common to see jade or jadeite labeled at very high prices, but heavily discounted in the department stores," says Li, "We hope that by introducing top-quality artifacts to the customers, the market can finally be stabilized."

River and mountain jade

At the center area of the exhibition hall, a counter specializing in fine white jade attracts much attention. The main production place for white jade is Hetian, Xinjiang. Hetian white jade is classified as shanliao (mountain jade) or zi'er yu (river jade), the former is relatively abundant and of inconsistent quality; the latter is rare and of high quality. Zi'er jade is found mainly in the Yulongkashi and Kalakashi riverbeds.

In ancient times, the summer thaw swept jade rocks from the mountain downstream. After years of rolling, grinding and bouncing along the riverbed, the impurities were eliminated, leaving round, smooth and creamy pieces of jade. The most precious variety of zi'er jade is called yangzhi yu, or "suet jade."

"There is no other stone in the world that can compete with Yangzhi jade in terms of its smoothness and mildness," Yang Zhanxian, who has been in the jade business for over 10 years, told *Beijing Today*. Since Hetian white jade has been valued as a commodity and sought after at least as far back as the Han Dynasty, 2,000 years ago, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find good new pieces, and prices for the raw material are surging.

In Yang's showcase, two one-kilogram pieces of raw jade, with a layer of dark orange "skin," are worth 250,000 to 300,000 yuan each. Larger pieces weighing about



River jade from Hetian, Xinjiang. Flawless pieces such as these are exceptionally rare. Valued at 300,000 – 500,000 yuan each.

Jade has been prized by emperors, artists and collectors for thousands of years in China.

Jadeite is a relative newcomer, first introduced from Burma in the 18th century.

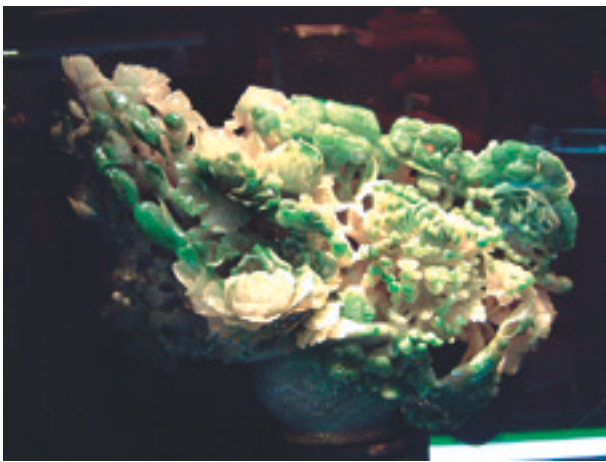
Both stones are from the same family. Jadeite is translucent, sometimes even transparent. Jade is not.

The essential difference lies in their degree of hardness.

On a scale where diamonds have a hardness of 10, jadeite rates around 7, while jade can be anywhere from 4 to 6.5.

10 kilograms are worth 300,000 to 500,000 yuan. A flawless piece weighing over 10 kilograms is generally considered priceless.

There is a saying in Chinese that "a piece of jade cannot realize its true value unless it is carved," but Yang contends that a perfect piece of jade makes the carving knife useless. In that case,



Carved jadeite, valued at around 100,000 yuan.

Photos by Miao Yajie

the nature of the jade itself is the thing to appreciate. "The mildness of the jade reflects the personality of the Chinese people," says Yang, "this may explain why the Chinese love jade, especially white jade."

Easy on the eyes

The import of jadeite from Burma began in the 18th century and it rapidly found a ready market among jade lovers.

There are many rags-to-riches stories from the period of "jadeite gambling." The buyer and the seller would not cut the raw stone open until after the deal was done, both relying on their experience to judge the potential worth, if

any, of the rock. Sometimes when the stone was cut open, the buyer became fabulously wealthy in an instant. Sometimes he lost his shirt.

These days, mystery and misunderstanding abound, given that the standard of valuing jadeite is anything but standard, and that there are four categories of jadeite on the market.

First grade jadeite refers to naturally occurring, original pieces. Grade two jadeite has been soaked in an acid solution to get rid of the impurities and enhance its translucency. The gaps are then plugged with artificial filler. Third grade jadeite refers to pieces that have been



Reproduction of a Han Dynasty incense burner, carved from the finest Hetian white jade. Valued at 280,000 yuan.

artificially colored; and fourth grade is not jadeite at all, either other types of jade, or green glass or plastic.

Third and fourth grade are relatively easy to distinguish, but grade two jadeite can be easily mistaken for the real thing, even by connoisseurs. "The only way to learn to distinguish fake or processed jadeite from the genuinely good pieces, is to see as many as possible and to compare," says jadeite specialist Ma Hengquan, "basically, the real, high quality jadeite is pure, transparent and easy on the eyes."

Where: 4F, Beijing Arts and Crafts Shopping Center, Wangfujing **When:** 9:00 am - 8:00 pm, till April 18

Oracle Bones Unearthed in Shandong

By Yi Yi

One century after oracle bone inscriptions were found at Anyang, Henan Province, shedding light on the 3,000 year old Shang Dynasty, excavations at a relic site in Shandong Province have unearthed the first Shang oracle bones to be found outside Anyang.

According to Xinhua News, Professor Fang Hui from the Archaeology Department of Shandong University said the excavation took place on the south east side of the Daxinzhuang relics site.

Speaking at a press conference in Jinan Tuesday, Professor Fang, who is in charge of the excavation, said the oracle bones unearthed are from the Shang cultural layer.

Experts have already classified eight pieces of bones inscribed with characters, four of which constitute one piece with 25 characters. Primary research shows that the content concerns prophecies about the fate of an unknown female.

Judging from the appearance of the bones, the method of engraving, the shape of the characters and the way in which the words are put together, the oracle bone inscriptions are of the same system as those unearthed at the Yin Ruins in Anyang, Henan. Analyses show that the inscriptions date back approximately 3,200 years.

In 1899, in one of the greatest archaeological finds the world has seen, oracle bone inscriptions were found at the Yin Ruins, a site of the capital of the late Shang Dynasty, near Xiaotun village Anyang County, Henan Province. Since then, archaeologists have been searching for oracle bones from outside the Yin Ruins, unsuccessfully until this latest find.

At Tuesday's press conference, archaeologist Li Xueqin described the find as a red-letter day for China's archaeology. "It is a landmark discovery in Chinese archaeology history, which will profoundly influence the research of ancient Chinese history and that of oracle bone inscriptions.

Daxinzhuang relics site was an eastern center of the Shang Dynasty, perhaps a capital of a state, said Li, judging from the content of the inscriptions.

The discovery provides information that might lead to a re-evaluation of the nature of Daxinzhuang relics site, contributes to the understanding of the relationship between the Shang Dynasty and its neighboring states, especially in the eastern area, and in exploring the political system and social structure of the Shang Dynasty.

Daxinzhuang relics site is located at the Licheng District, Jinan, and was first discovered in the 1930s. Investigation and surveys over the years show that the site covers an area of over 300,000 square meters. It is the largest Shang Dynasty relics site found so far, and the excavation is still continuing.

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By Dong Nan

Unknown to the masses, Chinese independent documentaries are entering a veritable golden age, receiving hard-won recognition and acclaim overseas while they fly straight under the public radar in this country.

The barely-advertised first Chinese Documentary Week, which kicked off in the capital on March 28, provided a forum for those in the know to check out some new films and those unconnected to the documentary scene to get a good look at what domestic filmmakers are up to. During the five-day activity, put together by the Hall for Movie and Music Fans, an organization that focuses on avant-garde movies and culture, over 50 documentaries, most independently produced, were screened.

"Over the past dozen-or-so years, Chinese documentaries have scaled new heights. Every year, one or two new independent filmmakers come forth with excellent works that win international awards," said Lin Xudong, vice professor at the School of Cinema and Television of Beijing Broadcast College.

"Prime time on TV goes to soaps, Documentaries are treated as items of elite culture, not popular culture."

The Cinema Du Reel Paris film festival has taken a particular shine to Chinese documentaries, giving its grand prize to Duan Jinchuan's *No. 16*,

A scene from Ning Ying's *Railway of Hope*

Pictures Few Want to See

Domestic independent documentaries struggle to find an audience

Barkhor South Street in 1996 and Ning Ying's *Railway of Hope* in 2002. Yang Lina's *Old Men* won that festival's SCAM award in 1999.

And all this has happened just in the past 10 years. One of the main reasons for this blossoming is the development of digital video, which has made it possible for domestic filmmakers to make their own movies for just around 10,000 yuan.

Despite their low costs, however, few of these films show a return on their investment or do well in the market, which is dominated by imported documentary products, such as programs produced by the Discovery Channel and National Geographic.

The record for weekend sales of 28-yuan Discovery and National Geographic documentary VCDs at the Xidan Book Building is a staggering 150,000 yuan. No domestic documentaries can hold a candle to such sales.

Imported documentaries also get more public air time, showing up on CCTV-2 four hours a week. Statistics provided by that station show these programs have won a large following among viewers with middle school or university education, who make up around 80 percent of all viewers.



A poster for Chinese Documentary Week

Lin blames the situation on audience immaturity. "Independent documentaries, especially those with humanitarian themes, are popular among intellectuals, but have not been able to win over a larger audience," he said.

Documentary, a CCTV-1 program that exclusively shows domestic docu-

mentaries, is aired after midnight from Monday to Thursday. "Prime time on TV goes to soaps," said Xiao Tongqing, editor of the program. "Documentaries are treated as items of elite culture, not popular culture."

He continued, "We are happy to cooperate with independent filmmakers, as long as the themes of their works are relatively optimistic. We do not want our program to be crammed with the dark side of society."

Of course, exceptions are made, such as for Duan Jinchuan's *The Secret of My Success*, which is slated to be aired on the program in the near future. However, to get the green light, the original

A small audience watches Zhou Jue's *Here's My Friend's Home* at the National Library on April 1.

Photo by Wei Tong

60-minute version of the dark comedy that shows political corruption in a small village was cut to a 30-minute length.

Turnout for the documentary week was encouraging, as more than 300 people attended the opening of the activity and stayed in a hall in Beijing Normal University to watch Wang Bing's nine-hour documentary *Tie Xi Qu: West of Tracks*. Not all of the audience made it to the end, but those that did sang high praise of the epic work, which won the Best Documentary Award at the Portugal Film Festival in May 2002.

Zhu Rikun, manager of the Hall for Movie and Music Fans, is cautiously optimistic about the future for domestic documentaries. "There are things we have to do before the major problems are solved. That's what we're working on now — organizing these kinds of activities and providing chances for independent filmmakers and people interested in documentaries to communicate with each other."

He continued, "As time goes by, TV stations' management and organization will improve, and audience sizes will grow. Despite the problems, the future for Chinese documentaries looks promising."

Adventures in Art

By Zhang Huan

The solo exhibition "Adventure" featuring the works of young artist Huang Yuxing, a graduate of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, is now running at the Soka Art Center.

"This is an adventure of vision, and an adventurous meeting of different elements and different ideas," said Huang. He added he has endeavored to transform his personal feelings and experiences, inexpressible in mere words, into colors and symbols in his paintings.

The show highlights paintings done last year that share a theme of ancient Chinese architecture, which was inspired by a book Huang read on construction during the Qing Dynasty. The compositions of most of the paintings are similar: a table with its legs cut off is set at the bottom, on top of which stands a misshapen ancient Chinese building along with many little tokens of the modern world, such as poker cards, computer disks or false teeth. The tops of the paintings are empty and the backgrounds are monochromatic, which give the works a sense of cleanness, but also inhuman loneliness.

Another repeated subject is an American cartoon character depicted in bright colors against a light and hazy background. Huang explained his motive in creating these images as showing the meeting of the ancient and the modern, the Chinese and the foreign, as he has personally experienced.

Through his development from his "youth period", as labeled by the curators of the show, Huang has retained a light palette dominated by blue and white, which normally results in the main subjects, the buildings, glowing against a misty, dreamlike background.

One work that stands out is *Shield Ornament*, Huang's most recent creation, that depicts a strange ancient building in the spring, with a peach tree blossoming at the bottom left corner. The background of this painting is relatively dark, and on the table in the foreground lies a fragment of the national emblem of Iraq. Huang said, "I was trying to record the feeling of this spring, under gloomy skies and the shadow of war."

Where: Soka Art Center, north end of Xiushui Dongjie, Chaoyang District
When: March 29 - April 12 **Open:** 10 am - 9 pm, Tuesday - Sunday **Tel:** 8561 9356





Shield Ornament

Photo by Zhuang Jian


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Tony Leung at the presentation ceremony

Infernal Affairs Scoops HK Awards

By Dong Nan

Cop drama *Infernal Affairs* and Zhang Yimou's martial arts epic *Hero* swept almost every prize at the Hong Kong Film Awards Sunday, one of the most prestigious events on the Chinese movie circuit.

Tony Leung won best actor award for his role in the critically acclaimed *Infernal Affairs*, playing an undercover cop who infiltrates an underworld gang.

Leung beat another top contender, Leslie Cheung, whose suicide last week dismayed countless fans in China.

Dressed in black, Jacky Zhang, Andy Lau, Leon Lai and Aaron Kwok sang Cheung's hit, *The Wind is Going On* in tribute to the star before the presentation ceremony began.

Infernal Affairs grabbed seven of the 19 awards, including the most-coveted prizes of best film, director and actor. It also won best supporting actor, film editing, screenplay, and original film score.

Hero also won seven honors, for cinematography, art direction, costume design, original film song, action choreography, sound and visual effects.

Anna Christie Cometh Again

By Yu Shanshan

"Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see where you vas, no. Only dat ole devil, sea—she knows!" The closing lines of Eugene O'Neill's play *Anna Christie* neatly encapsulate this 1922 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama.

The play, staged in Beijing from April 5 to 10, marked the beginning of the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Meihua Prize, a national drama prize for young actors. The three cast members, Li Bangyu (Chris), Zhang Yechuan (Mat) and Wang Hong (Anna) are all former recipients of the prize.

The play tells the story of a ro-

mance between Anna, the prostitute daughter of a Scandinavian bargeman, and Mat, an Irish sailor and the only survivor of a shipwreck. Anna and Mat overcome numerous difficult obstacles on their way to marriage, not the least of which is her father, Chris Christopherson.

O'Neill regarded *Anna Christie* as his greatest failure, because so many viewers and readers misinterpreted it. To regard the couple's pairing-off as a happy ending is to read O'Neill's script as a romance, instead of a tragedy, and ignore the script's foreshadowing of doom.

"It's a tale of people who can't see where they're going, doomed to a mournful end by the mysterious pull of the sea," says Wang Xiaoying, the play's director and vice president of the National Theater. Wang has also directed *Everything in the Garden*, by Edward Albee and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. When he directed the play's Chinese version in 1997, in order to intensify the sense of uncertainty, Wang cut Act I and some of the happier lines, narrowing the story to the three central characters.



Zhang Yechuan(left) and Wang Hong Photo by Cui Jun

Soul Star Releases Debut

By Dong Nan

China has its very own soul singer. Twenty-something Edell, born in China and educated in Canada, recently released her debut *Touch My Soul*, and is now being hailed as "the first soul singer in China".

While at college in Canada, Edell studied under Ron Zabrocki, who has produced albums for Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston. It was at that time, she says, she fell in love with soul. "It is totally different to the usual pop songs. I think it contains individuality and wisdom," Edell told *Beijing Today*.



For many Chinese fans, soul is an afro-American style of music, how can someone from an Asian background grasp its true spirit? "In fact, my grandfather is Spanish. Besides, I lived in Canada for a long time and have had professional training for soul," says Edell, who describes her voice as a being a little "deeper" than local singers.

Tacks on the new album, acclaimed by local media as being "so fresh and beautiful," include *Vitamin*, *Chic Night* and *You Lie*, which are receiving airplay on several radio stations.



Jennifer Lopez Gets the Glass Slipper

By Nebula Dong

The story of Cinderella is known in one form or another in virtually every corner of the globe. The latest incarnation of the fairytale, *Maid in Manhattan* starring Jennifer Lopez, is currently screening in cinemas around Beijing.

Marisa Ventura (Lopez) is a street savvy single mother who works as a maid in a first-class Manhattan hotel. Enter Christopher Hall (Ralph Fiennes), a handsome, debonair heir to an American political dynasty. A chance meeting, a case of mistaken identity, and, somewhat implausibly, the two fall in love. From there, it is just a matter of time until Cinder's true identity

is revealed.

The film has met with mixed reviews, with some commentators being so unkind as to suggest it is nothing more than an attempt to launch a fading pop diva in a new career.

While the *Cincinnati Enquirer* enthused, "This is not the first time (Lopez) has proved her talent goes well beyond a camera-ready face and figure, but she adds a layer of intensity to what is otherwise a fluffy fantasy," the *Chicago Sun-Times* declared the film to be "a transparent attempt to do for Jennifer Lopez what *Pretty Woman* did for Julia Roberts and send her soaring into the stratosphere of movie stardom."

WORLDWIDE



Amanda Bynes

"Tween" Star Bynes Moves on to Romantic Comedy

At the age of 12, Amanda Bynes was hosting her own TV variety sketch show. Last year, she got her own TV sitcom and now, at 17, she is starring in her first big screen romantic comedy *What a Girl Wants*.

Her comic timing has been compared to Lucille Ball and her oddball character creations recall the late Gilda Radner. But what Amanda Bynes really wants is not fame or fortune but the right not to be pigeon-holed.

"I want to find what seems right for me. I want to do good work, whether it's in TV or film. I don't want to do a movie just because it's going to be a box-office hit. I don't have a career mapped out. Just one day at a time. We'll see," Bynes told *Reuters*.

(Reuters)



Winona Ryder

Winona Ryder Completes Service in Shoplifting Case

Actress Winona Ryder wants to hold a charity auction to sell the \$5,500 worth of clothes and accessories that she stole from a posh department store but a judge on Monday was reluctant to buy into the plan.

Beverly Hills Superior Court Judge Elden Fox praised the 31-year-old actress for completing the community service part of her three-year probation ahead of schedule but sparred with her lawyer, Mark Geragos, over whether she could dispose of the merchandise by holding a charity auction.

(Reuters) Metallica, Blur, Linkin Park to Headline UK Fests

Metallica, Blur, and Linkin Park will headline the UK's Reading and Leeds festivals this August.

The events begin August. 22 with Leeds Festival headliner Metallica and Reading headliner Linkin Park. Linkin Park moves

over to Leeds on August 23, while Blur takes over headlining duties at Reading. The final day of the event will see Blur at Leeds and Metallica at Reading.

Among the other acts confirmed to play the festivals at various points are Blink 182, System Of A Down, the White Stripes, Beck, Sum 41, Courtney Love, Doves, the Streets, the Datsuns, and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Last year's weekend was highlighted by performances from Guns N' Roses, Foo Fighters, the Strokes, and Pulp, among others.

(Reuters/VNU)



Danielle Spencer and Russell Crowe

Bad-Boy Crowe Weds Veiled Spencer

Hollywood bad boy Russell Crowe, putting an end to his womanizing days, married longtime girlfriend Danielle Spencer on Monday in a traditional wedding on his Australian farm.

Oscar-winning Crowe has earned himself a reputation as a hard drinking, brawling movie star in the mold of Hollywood legends such as the late Richard Harris, one of Crowe's best friends.

(Reuters)



Paul McCartney

McCartney Loses Voice, Cancels UK Show

Former Beatle Paul McCartney canceled the second show of his first British tour in ten years, saying he had lost his voice because of a bad cold.

McCartney opened the British segment of his "Back in the World" tour with a Saturday concert in Sheffield, northern England. He called off a second show in Sheffield Sunday, said his spokesman Geoff Baker.

"I've caught a cold which made my voice start to go after last night's show," Baker quoted McCartney, 60, as saying.

(Reuters)

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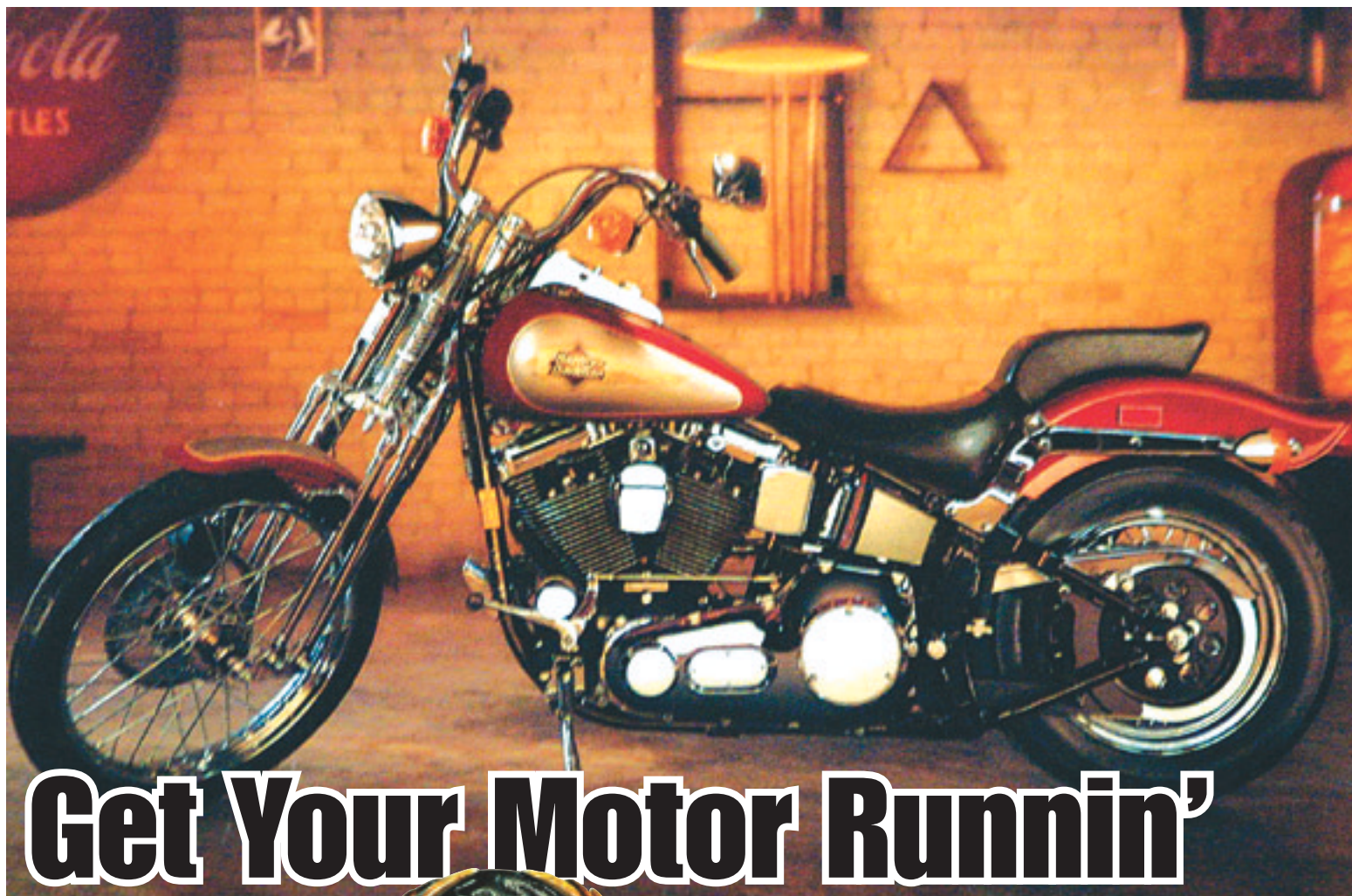
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Get Your Motor Runnin'

By Salinda

Since the bikes are so rare here, many Chinese mistakenly believe that Harley Davidson is a clothing maker, according to Qin Huan. Qin is a huge Harley fan and runs the Chrome Horse Motorcycle Culture Club Beijing, which not only strives to spread biker culture, but also is an outlet for authentic Harley bikes, accessories and, yes, clothes.

The stars of the store, of course, are the hogs. On display are a few imported Harley motor-



Belt buckle, 285 yuan

cycles, which range in price from 100,000 yuan to 350,000 yuan.

Harley owners actual and hopeful can keep up their image with a range of t-shirts (200-600 yuan), jeans (700-900 yuan), helmets (2,000-6,000 yuan), eye-

wear (600-1,000 yuan) and boots (600-2,000 yuan). The famed bike name also turns up on accessories such as belt buckles (400-600 yuan) and belts (200-1,000 yuan), lighters (400-1,000 yuan), pins (200 yuan), wallets (300-1,000 yuan) and model motorcycles (75-700 yuan).

This year is a special one for Harley, the company's centennial anniversary. To celebrate, it has released a series of collector items, all engraved with the words "100th anniversary". These limited-issue items do not come cheap, though, with a key

chain engraved with a picture of the famous "Bad Boy" motor going for 499 yuan, a silver belt buckle for 999 yuan and a silver lighter for 7,000 yuan.

Biker babes can round out their look here with a selection of earrings (100 yuan per pair), bandanas (200-400 yuan) and bags (1,000-2,000 yuan). There's even something for future Hell's Angels, little stuffed hog dolls that fetch 65 yuan each.

Where: F1, 124, Balizhuang Beili, Chaoyang **Open:** 10 am - 6 pm **Tel:** 8582 5566

Photos by Aily

Fine China from Korea

By Salinda

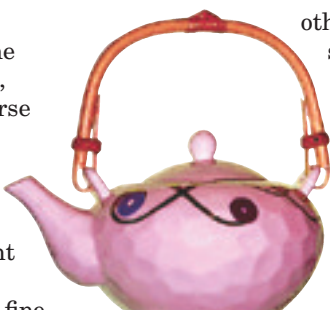
When those in the know think Chinese porcelain, the first word that comes to mind is Jingdezhen, a town in Jiangxi Province that has been China's china center for hundreds of years. To get their hands on real Jingdezhen porcelain, however, those in the know also have to be those in the dough.

An excellent alternative for high-quality porcelain at more reasonable prices is the bone porcelain imported from Korea on offer at the Le Yi Ju store. While this porcelain is

fundamentally different from the Jingdezhen type, with an ox or horse bone content of up to 43 percent, it is similarly semi-transparent, light and thin.

Moreover, this fine china is available in a range of styles and items, such as dining sets, tea sets, vases and ashtrays at quite reasonable prices. Few items come in over the 1,000-yuan mark.

The designers of this bone china seem to think that less is more, as the pieces are simply decorated without splashy colors or



"Gems" teapot, 680 yuan

other clap-trap. One series of plates is adorned with elegant, small paintings of green leaves, while a teapot bears the mark of a single light pink flower.

Following the simple theme is the Muse series of china goods, all of which are covered in small flowers and light colors. Representatives include square jewelry boxes (498 yuan each), ashtrays (399 yuan each), saucers (488 yuan each), soup bowls (238 yuan each) and teapots (889 yuan a piece).

Shoppers looking for a little more daring in their porcelain can check out pieces in the Gems series, which bear colorful



"Muse" teapot, 899 yuan

Photos by Aily

A Touch of Glass

By Lisa Huang

Crystal has an elegance and beauty desired around the world, but high prices make it available to a select few. Fortunately, high-quality glass is a passable alternative that can be had a fraction of the cost. One good place to look for beautiful glassware is BX, a store on the second floor of COF-CO Plaza.

All the goods on sale at BX are designed by foreign glass artists, meaning the store keeps up with international glass trends. Despite their high quality and original designs, glass pieces are priced well within reason, ranging from 20 to 500 yuan.

Like crystal, one of the most popular forms of glass is the vase. A new offering for this season at BX is a series of bamboo-shaped vases (57-97 yuan), the largest of which stands about a half-meter tall, with its every joint carefully shaped. Other interesting vase choices are ones with heart-shaped rims



and long, thin bodies (30-60 yuan), and a 0.7-meter-high vase shaped like a wine glass (144 yuan).

The store specializes in "twin" glass vases, available in semicircles, rectangles and other shapes. These pairs can be put together as a customer wishes. For example, a pair of half-circles (68 yuan each) can form a complete ring or more abstract shapes.

Other offerings include fish bowls that look like UFOs, a wide variety of wine glasses and jade-like glass dining ware.

Where: C223, COFCO Plaza, Dongcheng **Open:** 9 am - 9 pm **Tel:** 8455 2625



Photos by Cui Hao

Worldly Goods

By Lisa Huang

In a home decoration store run by a woman from tiny Mizhi county in Shaanxi Province, you might expect a traditional Chinese theme. But proprietor Yan Qu, like her store, has some surprises up her sleeve.

Yan is a travel buff, reflected in the distant origins of many of the items on sale. On an old Chinese-style table sits a spread of colorful Indian jewelry boxes that sell for only 20 yuan each. Another house special is a selection of wood and

porcelain bowls brought back from Thailand (85-95 yuan each). They stand out because each has two notches in its rim and two small holes cut into the opposite side. The not-so-obvious but very effective purpose of these cuts is to create a stable place to put one's chopsticks.

If it's time to get a brand-new bag, check out a series of brown leather cases decorated with silver pieces and colored stones, again from India, which go for 230 yuan to 450 yuan. A selection of fun tealights offers many choices for making a room more fun or romantic. Designs range from woven rattan lights to cute metal ones shaped like stars or angels (85-98 yuan).

The exotic feeling of the store is continued with some carved wood masks (around 300 yuan each) from the Dongba people of Yunnan Province and a selection of hand-woven tablecloths (300-1,500 per piece). Yan also brings it on home with some Chinese-style furniture that she designed herself.

Where: 43 Laitai Huahui Jie, 9 Maizidian, Chaoyang **Open:** 9 am - 7 pm **Tel:** 6463 5588 ext 3290



Wooden animal puppets, 98 yuan

Photo by Cui Hao

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Hotspot For Hotpot

By James Liu

The new restaurant Kongji Kaibaoguan is an anomaly among local eateries — a restaurant that serves no cooked dishes. The joint can do that without poisoning people because what it does serve is Cantonese hotpot, which comes to the table filled with ingredients pre-cooked to around 80 percent done.

The restaurant has a funky feel, since it is housed in a former movie theater, and offers some pretty funky, very Cantonese choices. The hotpots come in nine basic types, rabbit, dog, donkey, lamb, chicken, fish, snake,

tortoise, and beef ball. After customers make their choices, they just have to wait for their pots to start to boil before tucking in. Vegetables are ordered separately to add some nutrition to the brews.

Diners may be put off by the live poultry near the door, there to show the freshness of the birds before they are slaughtered, but most quickly come around with one whiff off the exotic hotpots. One stand-out is the beef ball pot (*niurouwan*, 18 yuan), featuring beef brought in from Guangdong Province. Or customers can try one of those fresh birds in pots that start at



Lamb hotpot (yangrou bao), 68 yuan

Photo by Zhuang Jian

28 yuan and go up, depending on species.

The kitchen has worked out special seasoning sauces for each type of hotpot, all of which go for just 3 yuan per bowl. Overall, prices are low compared to the quality of the food and the dé-

cor, with its hardwood floors and beautiful furniture. Even the colored glass windows were brought in from Hong Kong.

To stir up more business, the restaurant is running a special promotion in which one hotpot a day is priced at 35 percent off.

For the summer, the kitchen is getting conventional with trials of new dishes.

Add: No. 16 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am - 2 pm, 5-10 pm **Tel:** 6502 5558 **Average cost:** 30 yuan per person and up

New Face for Cuisine Gallery

By James Liu

For years, Cuisine Gallery in the Xinqiao Hotel has enjoyed a strong reputation for its Russian fare. The place is getting a new flavor these days, however, with the arrival of new executive chef Peter Hoellrigl, who is adding French food to the menu to match the restaurant's cozy atmosphere, charming decoration, and comfortable chairs.

Chef Hoellrigl is a master of making crepes, French-style pancakes, and the menu lists many choices. The delicate delicacies can come in savory form, called *galettes*, which are normally made of buckwheat flour and served as a main course, or as desserts, made with wheat flour.

Other menu additions include *quiche lorraine* (35 yuan), *tartiflette* (potatoes in reblochon cheese casserole, 55 yuan), mussels in white wine (66 yuan) and sirloin steak with blue cheese sauce and *gratin dauphinois* (110 yuan).

There is no better way to seal off a satisfying meal than with *nos crêpes sucrées*, a crepe filled with caramelized pineapple, white rum and coconut that costs 39 yuan.

Add: Second floor, Novotel Xinqiao, 2 Dongjiaominxiang, Dongcheng **Open:** 11:30 am - 2 pm, 5:30-9 pm **Tel:** 6513 3366 ext. 2201 **Average cost:** 80 yuan per person and up



Photo by Zhuang Jian



Dining in the Dotcom Ashes

not do so without food."

The restaurant serves Sichuan, Shandong and Cantonese-style dishes, in large quantities and at reasonable prices. Diners who like spice should check out the house special *zhangfei niurou* (quick-fried beef with peppers and Chinese prickly ash, 22 yuan). Another tasty choice is fried sliced eggplant (*gan-*

bian qiezi, ten yuan), which is similar to potato chips, but better. The restaurant's seafood selections are generally cheaper than at most competitors around town.

Add: Kaiqi Building, north of Madian Bridge, Beisanhuan Zhonglu, Haidian **Open:** 10:30 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 8200 6062 **Average cost:** 20 yuan per person and up

By James Liu

A restaurant's neon sign among the concrete forest around Madian Bridge on the North Third Ring Road announces dining has entered the information age. The sign reads: 家乡菜 .com (localfood.com). Do not try the website, though - it has been shut down.

Owner Yao Juhua used to be deep in the IT economy as an investor in a now-dead on-line real estate company before he started the eatery, which features flavors from around the country, in 2001.

The décor of the second-floor restaurant is filled with interesting juxtapositions. A dark red stone floor and simple chairs and furniture are overlooked by a huge photo of Chairman Mao Zedong, a line of English under that photo reads, "China is changing."

Things get even more complicated by the juxtaposition of traditional woodcuts, padded jackets and calligraphy hanging on the walls next to photos of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. The Internet-era feeling is reinforced by the names of the private rooms, such as Silicon Valley, Zhongguancun and Fortune.

After the demise of his e-company, Yao has made what he believes is a safer investment, as he explained, "people can live happily without the Internet, but they can-

Cooking Chinese at Home

Twice Cooked Pork Huiguo Rou

By Wesley Lei

The pork in this spicy Sichuan dish really is cooked twice, first steamed, then stir-fried. Hot and sweet bean sauces add a distinctive flavor - look for them in supermarkets and ask for *dajiang*. If you can't find them, you can use dried chilies and hoisin sauce with equally delicious results.

Preparation time: around 45 minutes.
Serves: 4

Ingredients:

1 pound pork loin, boneless center cut and trimmed of fat
1/4 cup corn oil
1 cup green peppers, diced into 1-cm cubes
1 cup red bell peppers, diced into 1-cm cubes
1 cup cabbage, diced into 1-cm pieces
4-5 dried black mushrooms; softened, stems removed and cut in quarters
2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped fine
1 tbsp ginger, chopped fine
1 tbsp rice wine
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp chili paste with garlic
2 tbsp bean paste
1 tbsp sugar
1/4 tbsp ground white pepper



1 tbsp salt
1 tbsp cornstarch
3 scallions cut into 1-cm lengths

Preparation:

Place the pork in a steamer basket in a covered pot with some water and steam on medium heat for 25 minutes. Drain and let cool. Combine the rice wine, soy, chili paste, bean paste, sugar, white pepper, salt and cornstarch; mix well so the cornstarch has no lumps. Combine the peppers, cabbage, garlic and softened and cut mushrooms. Slice the pork into two-millimeter wide pieces. Heat the oil in a wok or heavy bottom pan, and when hot add the pork and brown lightly, then drain and keep warm. Add two more tablespoons of oil and heat. Put the cooked pork back in the pan, increase the heat to high and add the pepper mixture and cook one minute, then drain and keep warm. Add the sauce mixture, pork and peppers and boil thoroughly for one minute to thicken. Last, stir in the ginger and scallions. Serve hot.

Get Your Medicine at Emergency Room



Photo by Cui Hao

By Helen Hong

Now that the weather is heating up, do you have a safe place to go when you need to chill out? Where can you go when you absolutely need a well-made cocktail or are desperate for some cool tunes? Emergency Room may be the answer.

This sprawling bar stands out from the pack for several reasons. First, outside its main door is a large but cozy outdoor area, surrounded by wood fences and furnished with wicker chairs. The inside of the two-story bar upholds the clean lines of a hospital, decorated with simple tables and sofas that make a powerful statement and comfortable place to sit.

In both sections, the medical theme is upheld by the waitstaff, outfitted in nurse and doctor uniforms, and ubiquitous red crosses, making their mark on cups, plates and ashtrays. Drinks even come in glasses shaped like test-tubes.

Fortunately, in those tubes are the liquid results of some successful experiments. Among the house specials worth checking out are: Aspirin (40 yuan), made from gin, lime, egg white and sugar syrup, to soothe the mind and throat; Fluid (40 yuan), a delicious combination of milk and fresh banana; and Emergency Room (45 yuan), an alcohol IV made from tequila, cointreau, orange juice and grenadine.

Add: 6A Xingfu Yicun, Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **Open:** 6pm - 2am **Tel:** 6413 0085

Dining Out

By Wesley Lei

Easter Fun

Fun for the whole family at Trader's, as kids can bake pizzas, decorate eggs and then tuck into a scrumptious buffet lunch with their parents. The fun continues with an egg hunt and magic show. **Cost:** 360 yuan net for two adults and one child **When:** April 19-20 **Tel:** 6505 2277 ext. 35

Happy Easter

The Coffee Garden is hosting a party, including an egg hunt game with lots of prizes and an egg painting competition. The buffet tables will be loaded with roast lamb, chocolate and cakes. **Cost:** 198 yuan plus 15 percent surcharge **When:** April 20 **Where:** Shangri-La Hotel **Tel:** 6841 2211 ext. 2727

French Easter

Come and feast at the Easter brunch at Justine's restaurant and indulge in Chef Michel's unique and exquisitely prepared creations of regional specialties from all four corners of France at only 198 yuan. **Where:** Jianguo Hotel **Tel:** 6500 2233 ext. 8039

Sunday Brunch

Celebrate Easter with a sumptuous buffet brunch, featuring garden-fresh salads, main dishes and tempting desserts. Children can enjoy an egg hunt, with fantastic prizes, along with a mini petting zoo with bunnies, chicks and ducklings. **Cost:** 98 yuan net per adult and 50 yuan net per child under 10 **When:** April 20, 11:30 am - 2:30 pm **Where:** Café California, Rose-dale Hotel and Suites **Tel:** 6436 2288 ext. 2617

Easter at The Patisserie

The Patisserie brings you the spirit of Easter from April 5 - 21 through the exquisite seasonal creations of Chef Christoph, including hot cross buns, Greek Easter bread, marzipan Easter bunnies and chocolate Easter figures. **When:** 8 am - 9pm **Where:** Grand Hyatt Beijing **Tel:** 8518 1234 ext. 6362



Celebrate Easter Sunday

Silk Road Trattoria will hold special Easter brunch with a sea of balloons, and offers face painting and egg hunting in the East Garden. **Cost:** 185 yuan net per adult, 120 yuan net per child, free for kids under three years old **When:** April 20, 11 am - 3 pm **Where:** The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel **Tel:** 6590 5566 ext. 2117

International Easter

Check out the Easter brunch with a selection of international foods and traditional Easter fare including 11 cooking stations brimming with your favorites. **Cost:** 215 yuan plus 15 percent surcharge; 265 yuan plus 15 percent surcharge including wine, beer and buffet **When:** April 20, 11:30 am - 3 pm **Where:** Seasons Café, Kempinski Hotel **Tel:** 6465 3388 ext. 4105

Easter Bunny Is Back in Town

Celebrate Easter at the Atrium Café with a special buffet. Kids can play in the "Easter Farm" with lovely chickens, bunnies and ducklings, and children under six eat free. Starting April 5, chocolate eggs and other goodies are on sale at the Gourmet Corner. **Where:** Hilton Hotel Beijing **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext. 7406



Photos provided by Grand Hyatt Beijing

Exhibitions



I love peace Wang Aiting, 2003

Wang Aiting Oil Exhibition

Wang Aiting graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts. This collection of over 30 oil paintings both on paper and cloth, show a theme of love for life and peace.

Where: Hanmo Gallery, Sanlitun Beili, Chaoyang
When: April 12-26, 1-10 pm
Admission: free
Tel: 13671 149660

Stepping into Spring

This exhibition features landscapes reflecting Jiangnan water village, early spring in Lingnan, the elegance of the Lijiang River and majestic mountains of north China, by Li Xiongcai, Liu Maoshan, Zhao Wuchao, Song Di, Feng Linzhang and Du Yingqiang.

Where: Wanfung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie **When:** April 10-28, 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320



Tibetan man Cheng Jiankun, 2003

From Past to Present

Li Qiang's oil paintings reflect the changes in society over the past 20 years. Themes include how a series of newly emerging sectors, such as the stock market, have influenced people's lives.

Where: Qin Gallery, Huaweili Enjoy Paradise1-1E (north of Beijing Curio City) Chaoyang **When:** April 16-30, 9:30 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461

Beijing, Hubei, and Tibet Paintings

Works feature the local life, scenery of Tibet, the landscape of water village in south China and the scenes of Beijing hutongs.

Where: Creation Gallery, north end of Ritan Donglu **When:** April 7-18, 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570

Apartment Blocks

New sculpture installations created by Wang Shugang. The exhibition features the vast labyrinth of numbered doorways in Chinese housing complexes. The sculptures are comparatively pointed and less abstract than his previous works, employing contrasting mediums and neon signs. They reflect Wang's role as a witness to the new Chinese society taking shape around him.

Where: Courtyard Gallery, 95 Donghuanmen Dajie **When:** till April 30, 10 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6526 8882

Overlooking in Village

Zhang Yinghua, a graduate of the Sichuan Art Academy, has been painting with oils since 1987. He has participated in many national exhibitions, and his works have been collected overseas.

Where: Fa Fa Gallery, 2 Xiangjiang Beilu, Jingshun Lu, Quanfa Garden Clubhouse, Chaoyang **When:** April 16 - May 15, 10 am - 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587

Hualai United Artists Gallery Opening

The premiere exhibition of Hualai Gallery, featuring old Beijing through ink paintings, wood cuts, miniatures of traditional houses, ceramics. A folk performance will be held on April 12 from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm in the front of the gallery.

Where: Novotel Peace Hotel, 3 Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing **When:** April 12-20, 10 am - 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6512 8833 ext 6716

Stage

Variety Show

Ode to the Plum Blossom features some 400 *Plum Blossom* Award winners, in a show marking the 20th anniversary of the launching of the theatrical award. These include highlights of theatrical performances including opera, drama, children's plays and Peking Opera.

Where: Great Hall of the People **When:** April 12, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-800 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888

Shaoxing Opera (Yue Ju)

Mao Weitao, *Plum Blossom Award* winner for the second time, and other actors including Cheng Xiaohong, Zhou Yunjuan will perform a series of customary Shaoxing operas such as *the White Snake (Baishe Zhuan)*, *Leopard Changes Place with Crown Prince (Limao Huan Taizi)* and others.

Where: Nationality Cultural Palace Theatre **When:** April 14-15, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

The First Intimate Contact

The Shaoxing opera version of the novel *The First Intimate Contact* by Cai Zhiheng. A romantic love story, Pizi Cai, who describes himself as "an uninteresting person with a sincere heart," thinks he has found true love when he meets a mysterious girl nicknamed "Flying Dance". Fuelled by their shared philosophy of life, their online relationship blossoms. At their first meeting, it was love at first sight.

However, after they have a perfect second meeting, Flying Dance leaves without a word...

Where: Nationality Cultural Palace Theatre **When:** April 16-17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

Concubine Yang of the Tang Dynasty (Datang Guifei)

The work is a combination of *Tales of Concubine Yang (Taizhen Waizhuan)* and *The Drunken Beauty (Guifei Zuijiu)* - two signature plays of the Mei Lanfang school. Next year is the 110th anniversary of the birth of Mei Lanfang, one of the most important artists in Peking Opera history.

Where: Poly Theater **When:** April 15-18, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,800 yuan **Tel:** 6506 5345



Music

Philharmonic Concert

Performed by China Philharmonic Orchestra. The programs include Dvorak's Violin Concerto in B Flat and *Carnival Overture*, and Schubert's Symphony No. 9. Conducted by Zhang Yi.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Library, Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** April 12, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30-120 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5731

Sports

A Long Way to Pray for Rain

This hike takes us up a valley past a cave that harbored bandits who preyed on local villages during the Tang Dynasty. The massive cliffs on the west side of the valley, with their covering of green cypress trees, create a micro-climate of humidity. It takes an extra hour to walk to the summit and back. Hiking up through houses built of stone, a stream gurgles by the track and little garden plots. The trail struggles up a ridge, and from the ridge drops down

Movies

Go Home (Sheng Dan Jing Mo)

Directed by Li Chensheng, starring Liu Peiqi, Song Chunli, Chen Xiaoyi, Fang Shu.

A young boy shows up at the doorstep of Peking Opera master, Zhang Jinhe. Though he is his grandson, Zhang angrily orders him to leave, because the boy's blue eyes and foreign features remind him of his daughter, who gave up a promising opera career and left the country to marry a foreigner. Pressured by his neighbors, the grandfather reluctantly



Catch Me If You Can

Directed by Steven Spielberg, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, Amy Adams, Christopher Walken, Martin Sheen, and Jennifer Garner. The true story of Frank Abagnale, the youngest man to make the FBI's most-wanted list for forgery. Posing at various times as a doctor, a lawyer, a pilot, and even an FBI agent, he passed millions of dollars in bad checks. After finally being captured, he escaped from prison. Abagnale eventually became a consultant for the FBI, specializing in the field of white-collar crime.

Where: local cinemas
When: April 11-24

allows his grandson to live with him. The two constantly battle, but a bond gradually forms. Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu
When: April 11-12, 8 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 6430 1398

Chihwaseon

Directed by Im Kwon-Taek, starring Choi Min-Sik, Ahn Sung-ki, You Ho-Jeong, Kim Yeo-jin, Son Ye-Jin. The story of legendary iconoclastic Chosun Dynasty artist Ohwon. Born a peasant named Jang Seung-up in 1843, a wealthy nobleman recognizes his talent and takes him in at an early age. The nobleman recommends Jang to a respected art teacher, and his career path begins. He



falls in love with a noble's daughter, but because of the class difference, the two can never be together. Heartbroken when she marries another man, he adopts the lifestyle of a drunken wanderer. Korean with Chinese subtitles.

Where: Fifth floor Hyundai Millennium Tower, 38 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang **When:** April 18, 5:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 8112

to Bai Long Tan village.

Where: Miyun, northeast of Beijing **When:** April 13, meet 8:30 am outside Starbucks at Lido Hotel, or 9 am at Capital Paradise front gate, return 5 pm **How much:** adults 150 yuan, children 100 yuan **Tel:** 13701 003694 **Email:** bjhikers@yahoo.co.uk

Parties

Spring Sun Tasting

The bi-annual Belgian Beer tasting is on again this Sunday afternoon. This time, there are four sets of six different Belgian beers on offer. One set costs 100 yuan. On the food side, Hidden Tree offers the best pizza in Beijing, or you can try fresh oysters.

Where: Hidden Tree beer garden, South Sanlitun Bar Street **When:** April 13, 2-10 pm **Tel:** 6509 3642

Clicquot Connection

Come share and celebrate your happiness, connect, chat and socialize in the bubbliest event with Veuve Clicquot Champagne. As Madame Clicquot used to say, "Only one quality, the finest." The special offer for the night is 120 yuan for two glasses of Veuve Clicquot Champagne (7:30-10:30 pm only), with complimentary canapés.

Where: Spicy Club, Scitech Hotel on Jianguomenwai Dajie **When:** April 16 **Tel:** 6526 3939

Jams

CD Jazz Club

The best venue in Beijing to taste real jazz. BBC blues band plays on Thursday night. Liu Yuan jazz band play Friday and Saturday nights, and on Sunday, the Moreno Donadel Trio perform for free.

Where: South of the main gate of the Agriculture Exhibition Center,

Chaoyang **When:** 9:30 pm **Admission:** adults 40 yuan, students 30 yuan **Tel:** 6429 9109

Afro-Caribbean Beat Night

The Deptford Crew will bring the Afro-Caribbean Beat posse of DJ Albert, Tree with the music from Africa and the Caribbean. Besides more fun and Caribbean punch are planned.

Where: Treeloung, Dongsanhuan Lu, south of the Agricultural Exhibition Center **When:** April 12, 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 13681 061172

Big Surprise in Big Easy

Ray Blue is back direct from Europe with his fabulous saxophone.

Where: Big Easy, South gate of Chaoyang Park **When:** April 14, 11 am **Admission:** 98 yuan **Tel:** 6508 6776

Lecture

Imperial Bureaucracy

Wan Zhenyou, a researcher from the China Academy of Social Science, will share his studies on supervisory and other civil service systems from the Song Dynasty. The talk will include an introduction to China's present-day government institutions and functions and those newly elected officials and delve into the depths of Chinese historical imperial politics. English translation provided.

Where: Lee's Antique Carpets, Liangmaqiao Lu, close to 21st Century Hotel **When:** March 1, 2:30-4:30 pm **Admission:** adults 40 yuan, students 30 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081

Chinese Modern Handwriting

Study the basics of Chinese modern handwriting, including the methods and genres of the pen. Two experts from Bohuilangrun art center will share insights about the works of the famous modern master Zhang Daqian. Reservation

White Wedding

Directed by Harry Shearer, starring Martin Mull, Mary Kay Place, Fred Willard, Michael McKean. A tactless host of a failing talk show moves the show to an average town. There he becomes involved with a local housewife, but standing in the way is her husband. French with Chinese subtitles.

In memory of Hong Kong actor Leslie Cheung, who died last week, his movies will screen next week until April 15, two every night.

Where: Space for Imagination, 5 Xiwangzhuang Handian **When:** April 15, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6279 1280

essential. Only Chinese.

Where: Chang'an Club **When:** April 15, 3-5 pm **Admission:** 30-50 yuan, including gloves for handling the pieces, coffee, tea and cookies **Tel:** 6522 9988 ext 6600

Activities

Watermelon Tour

April is watermelon planting season, local farmers will work with small teams. Go through the entire process from plowing to erecting a greenhouse canopy. After a day's hard labor, enjoy a traditional family meal in the village.

Where: Daxing, south of Beijing **When:** Meet at Starbucks, China World Trade Center at 11:30 am, April 12 **How much:** 180 yuan **Tel:** 6774 9159

Morning Walk: The Old Legation Quarter

South of Dongchang'an Jie lies a rectangle of streets and buildings known as the old legation quarter. Two streets, Taijichang Lu and Zhengyi Lu, cut through it from north to south, while from east to west it is intersected by Dongjiaomin Xiang.

Although demolition and new construction have obliterated many of the former compounds and buildings, much still remains. Former Dutch ambassador Roland van den Berg will lead a two-and-a-half hour walk through the area and talk about life in the quarter in former times. Reservations essential.

Where: Meet at south gate of Ritan Park **When:** April 12, 8:45 am, return at 12:30-1 pm **How much:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6512 1543

We are glad to receive your feedback. We will print employment, language exchange and accommodation info for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo @ ynet.com or call 6590 2522 **By Guo Yuandan**

Flowers Downtown

By Zhang Bo

Magnolias at Zhongnanhai

With its elegant shape and delicate fragrance, magnolias are synonymous with spring for Beijingers. Some 40 magnolia trees in Chang'an Jie along the wall of Zhongnanhai are now in full bloom. Set off by the red wall, the white magnolia flowers make a popular seasonal tourist attraction.

Where: Chang'an Jie, west of the Forbidden City

Oriental cherry garden at Yuyuantan Park

Oriental cherry trees are popular not only for their rarity, but also because they are one of the earliest flowers to bloom in spring. The oriental cherry garden is in the northwest of Yuyuantan Park, with some 2,000 cherry trees. Liyingyuan (鹈樱苑), a waterside pavilion at the center of the garden, is the best place to enjoy the view of the oriental cherry blossoms. Since 1989, an annual Oriental Cherry Festival has been held here every April.

Where: Yuyuantan Park lies between the West Third Ring Road and Sanlihe Lu, to the north of the Military Museum and the Millennium Monument.

Open: 6:00 am - 8:30 pm
Admission: 2 yuan

February orchid at Temple of Heaven

Eryuelan, or February orchid, blooms during early spring in Beijing. The blue wild flowers can

be seen in many of the city's parks. At the Temple of Heaven, Eryuelan can be seen everywhere, under trees and by walkways, like a blue mist. It is especially abundant under the old cypress west of the Hall of Prayer.

Where: Temple of Heaven, south of Chongwenmen

Open: 6:00 am - 8:00 pm
Admission: 14 yuan

Chinese crabapples at Tucheng Park

Tucheng Park, site of the only surviving remnants of the Yuan Dynasty city wall, boasts a variety of Chinese flowering crabapple trees, such as Xifu Haitang, Tiegeng Haitang and Yinxing Haitang. Every spring, 2,000 Chinese flowering crabapple trees create a floral sea. The Haitang (crabapple) Festival is held here in mid April every year.

Where: Tucheng Park borders the Xiaoyue River, extending from Xueyuan Nanlu in the south to Zhichun Lu in the north.

Open: 24 hours
Admission: free

Lotus pond at Beihai Park

The Behai Lotus Pond lies between Baita (White Pagoda) Hill and the south gate of Beihai Park, with a line of weeping willows to the east and a white marble bridge engraved with lotus designs to the west. In spring, big round lotus leaves sprout, some floating on the surface, others under water, like umbrellas in various states of opening. The green leaves

are interspersed with spectacular white and pink lotus flowers.

Where: Behai Park, Wenjin Jie

Open: 6:00 am - 9:00 pm

Admission: 5 yuan



Flowers Further Afield

By Helen Hong

Spring colors at Miyun

Taoyuanxian Valley (桃源仙谷), northeast of Miyun reservoir, sees peach, apricot, pear, azalea and chestnut trees flower one after another from April, turning the valley into a riot of spring color.

Getting there: Take bus 980 to Miyun, then a mini bus to the beauty spot.

Admission: 25 yuan

Apple blossoms at Huairou

From April to late May, the flowers are in bloom; including apple trees, Chinese crabapples, Chinese wisteria, lilac and wild lilies. Xiangshui Lake is a source of mineral water and a good place for fishing.

Getting there: Take bus 916 from Dongzhimen, 8 am on holidays and weekends.

Admission: 18 yuan

Potherbs and peaches at Fangshan

The Fifth Festival of Appreciating Flowers is held from March 28 to May 8 at Jiangjuntuo (将军坨), Tanmugang Village (檀木港村). Now is the time to dig out potherbs, see the peach and apricot flowers and feed the squirrels. During the festival, accommodation and admission to the scenic spot is

reduced by 20 percent.

Getting there: Take bus 917 from Tianqiao, or bus 948 from Pingguoyuan.

Admission: 15 yuan

Jasmine, pear, apricot and peach at Shangfang Mountain

Shangfang Mountain (上方山) is famous for its virgin forest, and is listed as one of 20 national model state forest gardens. During spring, the mountain is covered with jasmine, pear, apricot, and peach flowers, offsetting the towering cypresses and pines.

Getting there: Take bus 917 at Tianqiao to Fangshan and then take mini bus to Shangfang Mountain.

Admission: 40 yuan

Pear blossoms at Daxing

The pear trees are all blossoming at New Concept Pear Garden (新概念梨花庄园), Panggezhuang Town (庞各庄镇), on the east bank of the Yongding River. Amongst this sea of pink, tourists can plant trees, pick mini watermelons, potherbs, and mushrooms, or simply relax and enjoy a picnic.

Getting there: Take bus 937 (branch 2) to Lihua village.

Admission: Free, individual activities cost from 10 to 200 yuan.

Flowers Around Beijing

By Zhang Bo

Beijing's oldest magnolia

Dajue Temple (大觉寺), at the foot of Yangtai Mountain, was originally built in 1068. The temple is not only of interest for its historic Buddhist relics, it is also home to one of the oldest magnolia trees in Beijing.

It is said that Sengjialing, an abbot of the temple, planted two cuttings from Sichuan in the south yard during the reign of Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong, some 300 years ago, one of which still survives today.

In the north yard, there is another magnolia tree, also planted during the Qing Dynasty. The idiom, *gu si lan xiang* (old temple and fragrant magnolia), refers to the landscape here. Magnolia trees here are over seven meters tall and give out strong and pervasive fragrance, the scent of which wafts far and wide.

Getting there: Take long distance bus 903 from the Summer Palace to Dajue Temple (2 yuan), or bus 346 from the Summer Place to Beianhe Nankou (2 yuan).

Open: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Admission: 10 yuan

Apricot flower woods at Fenghuang Ling

From the end of March, the almond trees in Fenghuang Ling (凤凰岭, Phoenix Ridge), Haidian District, start to flower. Covering an area of nearly 40 hectares, 10,000 apricot trees look like a pink cloud from a distance.

Eryuelan flourishes under the trees, covering the hill with a purple carpet. There are pavilions in the woods, where visitors can sit and enjoy the sight of apricot flowers while tasting local snacks and a special kind of tea made with apricot flower, camellia and mineral water.

Fenghuang Ling also features two historical sites. Jingang Shita (金钢石塔) is the largest stone tower in the vicinity of Beijing, and nearby, a stone inscription in the cliff reads *Fenghuang Ling*.

Getting there: Drive north from the Summer Palace along the Yiheyuan - Yangtai road for half an hour, then turn west at the sign for Fenghuang Ling. Otherwise take bus 346 from the Summer Palace and get off at the terminus (2.5 yuan).

Open: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Admission: 15 yuan

Lilac at Jietai Temple

Jietai Temple (戒台寺), to the west of Beijing in Mentougou District, is renowned for its lilac. There are over 1,100 lilac trees here, and according to a 1997 survey, 20 are more than 200 years old. The only other two lilac trees of a comparable age in Beijing are in the Imperial Garden of the Forbidden City.

First built in 622, the Jietai Temple also features Buddhist buildings, ancient pines and caves.

Getting there: Drive west along Fushi Lu from Wukong Qiao to Shimenying, Mentougou District, then follow the signs to Jietai Temple. Otherwise take bus 931 from Pingguoyuan to the temple.

Open: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm
Admission: 35 yuan

Peach blossoms at the Botanic Gardens

Ornamental peach is a traditional decorative plant in the Beijing Botanic Garden. The Ornamental Peach Garden was completed at the beginning of the 1980s, and covers an area of 3.4 hectares. There are more than 40 varieties of peach trees cultivated here, such as red-white, golden-speckled and longevity peaches.

From the beginning of April to the end of May, a Peach Blossom Festival is held in the Ornamental Peach Garden. During the festival, there is display of bonsai peach trees.

Flowering plum, forsythia and cherry trees are also grown here.

Getting there: From the Summer Palace, take Xiangyi Lu and drive 10 kilometers. Otherwise take bus 904 from Xizhimen to the Beijing Botanic Garden (Zhiwuyuan, 2 yuan).

Open: 7:00 am - 5:00 pm
Admission: 5 yuan

Rose garden at Jianguocun

From late May to mid June every year, the countryside around Jianguo Village (涧沟村) is swathed in red, as masses of roses come into bloom. Jianguo Village lies to the southeast of the Fengshan Beauty Spot, Mentougou District. Roses grown here cover an area of nearly 67 hectares.

Getting there: A special bus to Fengshan Beauty Spot leaves from Pingguoyuan at 8:30 am and returns at 2:30 pm daily.

Open: 24 hours
Admission: 25 yuan



Photos by Cui Hao

You only need
look out your
window to notice
the change that
has swept over
Beijing in the last
few days. Gone is
the grey of winter,
banished by
spring green, and
flowers, flowers,
flowers...



Flowers China Wide

By Helen Hong

Azaleas in Guizhou

Near the juncture of Qianxi (黔西) and Dafang counties in northeast Guizhou, there is a natural azalea forest spreading over 50 square kilometers.

The azaleas blossom around "Qing Ming" or Tomb Sweeping Festival, according to the lunar calendar, the same time as the local Yi and Miao nationalities celebrate their traditional Chahua (camellia) Flower Festivals. The annual Azalea Festival is held at Jinpo (金坡) Village in Qianxi County.

Getting there: Take train T87 from Beijing West Railway Station Guiyang, then bus (20 yuan) or taxi to Qianxi. From there take bus (5 yuan) or a taxi (20 yuan) to Jinpo.

Peonies in Shandong

There are three stages to the peony blossom period at Heze (菏泽), Shandong Province. The first stage is from early April to mid April, the second is from mid April to late April, and the last ends in early May. April 22 to April 28 is the peak peony blossom period, and the time of the Peony Festival.

Heze lies in the southeast of Shandong, near the juncture of Jiangsu, Shandong, Hunan and Anhui provinces.

The city has a long history, and is the birthplace of many notable historic

figures. Nearby places of interest include Qinwang Bishu Cave (秦王避暑洞), where Emperor Qin once spent the summer and Juye Yongfeng Tower (巨野永丰塔).

Getting there: Take train T107 or T167 from Beijing West Railway Station to Heze.

Peach blossoms at Shaoxing

Every year in late March, there is a Peach Blossom Festival at the beautiful Hou Mountain (吼山) in Shaoxing (绍兴), Zhejiang Province.

The natural scenery in the region is exquisite, and there are numerous historic relics, including the kiln of the Yue Empire of the Spring and Autumn Period, and stone inscriptions left by famous poets and writers.

Getting there: Take train K255 from Beijing South Railway station to Shaoxing.

Oriental cherries at Nanjing

The island of Xuanwu Lake (玄武湖) is known as Cherry Island, because of the numerous oriental cherry trees growing there. This is a tranquil spot to sit and admire the cherry blossoms, perhaps due to the absence of amusement facilities nearby.

On the south bank of the lake, purple wildflowers are in bloom.

Getting there: Take train K45 or T65 from Beijing Railway station to Nanjing.